NEW ZEALAND
Reader's Digest

RD TALKS
OUR STORIES AS PODCASTS

BUTTON BATTERIES

Tiny But Deadly

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CAMEL GLAMOUR

The Beauty Queens Of Al Dhafra

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Health Risks Of KEEPING A SECRET

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PHOTOS: (COVER) SHUTTERSTOCK/GETTY IMAGES; (CAMEL) CASPAR WÜNDRICH

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KATIE MCKENNA

FROM THE BOOK *HOW TO GET RUN OVER BY A TRUCK*

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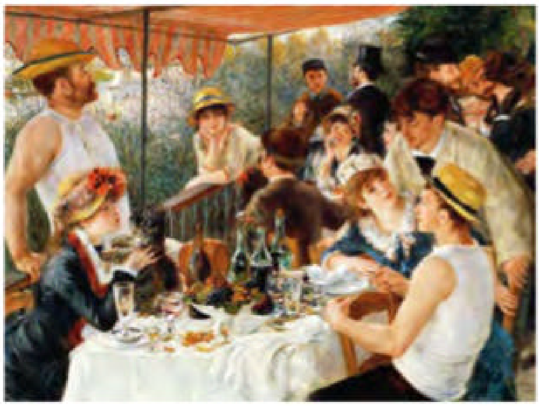
LETTERS

Reader's Comments And Opinions

Renoir's Guests



As a child I was fascinated by the reproduction of Renoir's *Luncheon of the Boating Party* that hung in my grandparents' lounge room. I was very envious of the young lady who was allowed to have her dog at the table. In 1987, as a teenager, I visited the National Gallery of Australia in Canberra for the Impressionists exhibition and saw the original in all its splendour. I knew that the boating party were friends of Renoir's, but I didn't know their connections to the artist until I read 'Renoir's Invitation To A Party' (January). I am now keen to visit the Restaurant Fournaise when I next visit Paris. **ANNE VICKERS**

Letting Go

Last year was fraught with a difficult decision involving a friendship. It had been toxic, at least for me. Reading 'Fade Away' (December) gave me the clarity I needed. It confirmed my conviction that I get to choose if the friendship adds to my life. It is sad but true that some friendships fade. **SUGGUNA MUNISAMY**

Always By His Side

I hadn't read a Reader's Digest until I was recently given a copy when my uncle passed away. I opened it at the Smart Animals page and it immediately reminded me of my uncle and his love of cats. A cat fancier since childhood and an Australasian Cat Judge, cats were always by his side. He credited his ➤

Let us know if you are moved – or provoked – by any item in the magazine, share your thoughts. See page 7 for how to join the discussion.

PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES

EDITOR'S NOTE

Quality Content That Goes Deeper

THE BONUS READ section of the magazine offers the chance to delve a bit deeper into extraordinary experiences of people. This month's article, 'Hit By A Truck' (page 116) is a confronting read of the personal challenges a young woman faced after surviving the unthinkable trauma of being run over (twice!) by a truck. Her ability to articulate her ordeal, the support she received from her family and medical team and her honest portrayal of her relationship with pain and the medication that helped ease that pain, will leave a lasting impact on all who read it.

Among the other stories in this month's issue is a consumer piece about the dangers of button batteries (page 28), the fascinating story of how Nike helped boost the revival of Harris Tweed (page 50), as well as a Genius article on the risks of keeping secrets (page 132). These stories and so much more for your reading pleasure in the March 2023 issue.

Louise

LOUISE WATERSON
Editor-in-Chief

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love of animals to a picture book called *Dinty* which he received as a young child. We found the book when collecting his belongings at his nursing home and, dressed in his cat tie, judging badge and treasured pet photos, we laid him to rest with *Dinty* in his arms.

MICHELLE FOLEY

Remembering Mum

Early last year my mother passed away after years of living with liver cirrhosis. I guess I was looking for something old and familiar, something that would remind me of her. Then I remembered her fondness for Reader's Digest. Now, I have subscribed and look forward to receiving a copy each month and fondly remembering my mother.

KATRINA AURELIO

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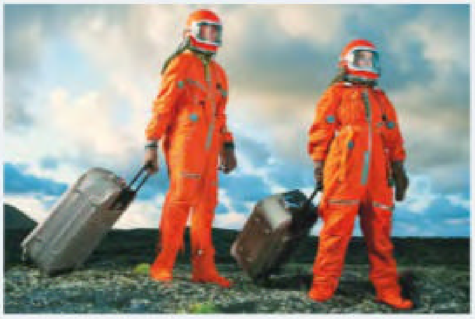

SPACE ODDITY

We asked you to think up a funny caption for this photo.

If you want to travel, suit yourself.

LIBBY CHAN

Scientists discover a new type of rock: Samsonite.

PERLA CUANAN

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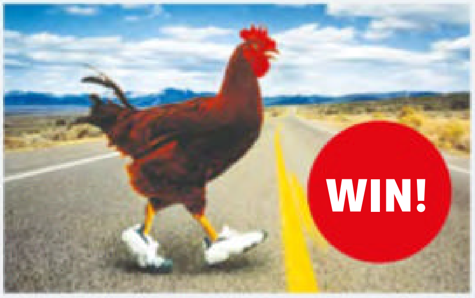
MARISKA BARSI

When I said, let's go on our honeymoon, I didn't actually mean to the Moon, Honey.

JAMES PANTER

Congratulations to this month's winner, Mariska Barsi.



CAPTION CONTEST

Come up with the funniest caption for the above photo and you could win $100. To enter, email *editor@readersdigest.co.nz* or see details on page 7.

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NEW ZEALAND
Reader's Digest

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MY STORY

At The Museum Of Memories

A daughter's bittersweet journey in reconnecting with her long-cherished past

BY *Ridhi Agrawal*

In 2019, just before the pandemic broke out and all international travel came to a halt, my Singapore-based younger sister insisted my mother and I join her for the Christmas holidays. My mum, who I've always perceived as a fearless woman, would get strangely nervous on flights, overwhelmed by the long-winded onboarding procedures and endless travelling hours. Perhaps the only thing that convinced her to overcome her fears was the fact that it would give us a much-needed chance to piece together our flailing bond, fraught by a galaxy of differences.

There was another highlight to the trip for my mother – a return to the place where she spent her honeymoon in 1989. Fast-forward 30 years, she would be walking down nostalgia lane with her now grown-up child. "I never imagined I'd ever revisit Singapore, let alone with you," she remarked.

Growing up, moments with Mum were painfully short-lived because we spent most of the year at our boarding school in Darjeeling, India, reuniting only during the holidays. Every year, she would eagerly await our return, which would always lead to a deluge of pampering the likes of which we missed sorely while away. I remember chilly days when she would smear us all over with olive oil as we basked gleefully in the warm, mellow, winter sun. Afterwards, there would be a solid scrub down with powdered wheat

ILLUSTRATION: GETTY IMAGES

husk and a hot bath that soaked her as much as it did us. Looking back, these motherly pamperings and indulgences replaced other, more conventional expressions of affection. Instead of hugs, kisses or 'I love yous,' we wrapped ourselves in wellness regimes and bouts of TLC over and over again.

Mum never regaled us with stories from her own childhood in detail. "I lost my mother when I was barely one and a half years old. I would search for her in the bathrooms to check if she was hiding there," she recalled, misty-eyed. When I first heard this, I felt a twinge that was hard to name: what do you call the feeling of building a world of affection with your children that you had only ever dreamt of?

Those sweet, cherished moments gradually waned as I grew older and moved further away from home for university. Soon, our relationship became unusual, strained. Weekly phone calls filled with small talk were too rushed and perfunctory to ever mature into real talk, real feelings. The tension led to arguments instead. To me, she seemed unable to comprehend that I was no longer a kid. Her stubborn, rigid points of view and old-fashioned advice on righteousness ignited the rebel in me, forcing me to hold back information or even lie frequently. But the more I pulled away, the more I felt an emptiness, a longing for the bond that had grown so dim. Perhaps Singapore would give us a chance to breathe it back to life.

I assumed the immersive exhibits at the famed Art Science Museum would rejuvenate my mother, who was an art student. I was surprised, then, when she said "A lotus blooms in the muck," without pausing to admire the *Skyscraper (the Bruges Whale)*, a sculpture put together using plastic waste to raise awareness about ocean pollution. "It's strange for a piece like this to be installed in such a gorgeous setting," she added.

"It's art, Mum! You have to be more appreciative of it," I defended. Her critique seemed to reinforce just how different we were.

Disappointed, and disheartened by the reminder of the space between us, I led her to the kid's zone, calming myself down and trying not to let my hopes for a renewed bond sink. Looking for a leveller to ease things, we signed up for a joint sketching activity. Secretly, I hoped producing something together would help us connect. As our creative juices flowed, our faded relationship began to take on the hues and shades of something sincere and beautiful.

"Look there!" she said excitedly, pointing towards a digital screen that displayed our creations. "That one's ours."

The fish we had drawn, with its big black eyes against lemon-yellow scales, was emblazoned with our names – our family of four.

Her eyes filled with a distant look, Mum went up to the screen and reached out, touching the fish as if doing so would bring it to life. We watched as it flexed its tail back and forth, propelling itself into the crowded virtual tank.

Looking around the arena, I saw other children sharing moments with their parents, and my own childhood flashed before my eyes. That momentary glimpse of my mother's childlike curiosity, that rare instance where she let slip an inner innocence and delight at a new experience revealed the little girl in her, who like me, had lost a vital connection to the trials and responsibilities of adulthood and motherhood.

"Our time together was like that of friends," she remarks now, as we look back on our trip.

"You were my mother, and I a child who followed you around."

Life had indeed come full circle.

SECRETLY, I HOPED PRODUCING SOMETHING TOGETHER WOULD HELP US CONNECT

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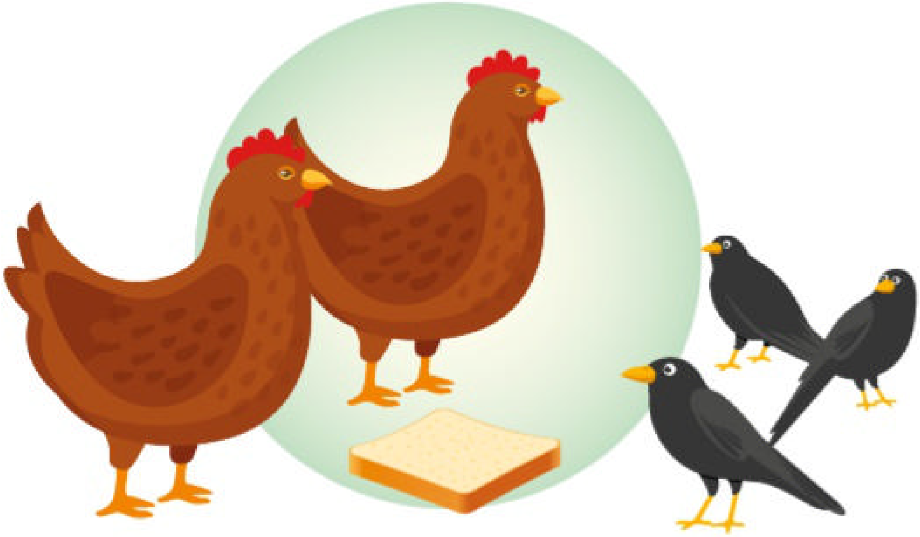

Something To Crow About

MARJORIE BECK

Until recently, we had two Isa Brown hens named Henny and Penny. They were 'old ladies' and happily roamed about our backyard. They had given up laying eggs months earlier. It was my custom to throw scraps out to them.

One morning, my husband was watching a crow perched on the back fence, looking at the scraps I had thrown for the hens. Especially appealing to the crow was a piece of bread.

The crow descended to attempt to snatch the prize, but the hens chased it away. It flew off, then reappeared with another crow. They both flew down to try to retrieve the bread, but the hens again chased them away.

Undeterred, they came back with a third crow. Two flew down to retrieve the bread and as they appeared occupied with being chased away by the hens, the third crow flew down and snatched the prize. The third crow returned to the fence, where the other two joined it and shared the bread.

You could earn cash by telling us about the antics of unique pets or wildlife. Turn to page 7 for details on how to contribute.

ILLUSTRATIONS: GETTY IMAGES

Building A Bower

SAMANTHA KENT

My boyfriend recently texted me a photo showing two tussocks of grass that had suddenly appeared on his property in the Blue Mountains west of Sydney.

Unlike the other tussocks that dot his yard, these ones were shaped like two curved walls of grass that met in the middle at the top. The 'nest' had been built by a bird – a bower bird, so named for constructions such as this. How did we know? The proof was in the feathers, bits of plastic and pieces of string – all blue – scattered inside and around.

I was able to see the bower bird for myself when I visited the following Saturday. The avian architect and builder appeared that morning, making a chattering call punctuated by odd purring sounds, which alerted me to his presence. I looked out the window to see him strutting about and hopping around the bower, holding a blue feather in his beak. The bobbing of his head, the wagging of his tail and the flicking and twitching of his outspread wings were silently observed by a female bower bird crouching inside the bower.

The male's sleek plumage was a deep blue-black with a satiny sheen. The female had an olive-green head and neck and a speckled chest. The pair engaged in their courtship ritual on and off throughout the day.

At times the male was so intent on ducking off to add another feather or petal to the collection, he seemed to forget the female completely. She would stand up every now and then and tuck a stray piece of grass back into place, as though adding her own personal touch.

Captivated by the display, I forgot about my boyfriend for a few hours, until I heard a raucous squawking noise and looked out to see him bobbing his head in a clumsy but endearing bid to get some attention himself.

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PETS CORNER

Lonely Pets

How To Avoid Separation Anxiety

BY *Sophie Taylor*

Pets should not be left alone for too long during the day. But our busy lifestyles will sometimes tear us away, creating a lot of guilt and worry for their wellbeing. Here are some tips to keep your pets content.

KEEP ’EM PURRING

Cats don’t simply curl up and sleep when you leave. They need stimulation for the period they will be left alone. If they have a friend or sibling they will create games, groom and comfort one another but if they are alone they will need more stimuli. Leaving the TV or radio on can help, and while you work out their favourite channel, you can’t go far wrong with classical music.

A multitude of cat toys are also available, some of which are also practical for your home, such as scratching posts to discourage furniture shredding and to keep their nails trimmed.

Catnip is another inoffensive distraction. This plant sewn into fabric toys can have a short pleasurable reaction in cats that will distract them from any feelings of loneliness.

LONESOME LASSIE

It’s not just smaller dog breeds that suffer from separation anxiety. All dogs dislike being left alone and unfortunately they can’t tell whether it’s been ten minutes or ten hours: the anguish felt is very similar. But

PHOTOS: GETTY IMAGES

you can help ease the anxiety at least. Background noise from the TV or radio can help them to feel less alone (different dogs prefer different styles of music; it's worth trying out a few radio stations).

There is even a dog TV channel designed to create happy and calm thoughts in dogs, showing idyllic scenes of fields, beaches and other dogs. It is currently only available in the US, but you could play its YouTube channel on a screen they can see.

You can also train your dog to disassociate your absence with negativity by gradually lengthening the distance and time of your separation until they can be left alone for 20 minutes without showing their usual symptoms of sadness and stress.

If your dog is fretful, leave them with a 'project' such as a rubber toy filled with cheese and hidden treats in their safe zone and perhaps invest in a plug-in adaptor that emits anti-stress smells.

HAPPY POLLY

Luckily, if you have other pets in the house, they alone can provide company and entertainment for your bird. Sometimes another bird of the same breed creates tension rather than contentment (unless they were bought in pairs or flocks).

Alternatively, cartoons or games channels left on the TV are the programmes of choice for your feathered friend. A fish tank can also deliver a source of calm and amusement for your bird, provided it can't reach into the water.

THIS LONELY PIGGY

Guinea pigs should be housed with siblings or friends and will be terribly lonely without other pigs. They love to play hide and seek and will appreciate simple cardboard tunnels or paper bags (with air holes cut) that they can run through and nibble at. Hanging chunks of apple, carrot, orange or lettuce around their house can provide hours of entertainment, too.

Be sure to change their bedding before you leave: a fresh room will make them 'squee' and jump in twists with happiness, known as popcorning. Another easy trick is to build a safe shelf in your guinea's home that they can access via a ramp, so that they are able to enjoy a different view.

Guinea pigs get lonely without a sibling or friend

CARING FOR THE CARERS:

THE IMPACT OF MS ON FAMILIES

Multiple Sclerosis (MS), is a chronic, progressive condition that causes a host of symptoms, including vision loss, pain, fatigue, cognitive changes and impaired coordination. Many MS symptoms are unseen. The impact of MS on those diagnosed is life-changing and relentless. But what is often less considered, is the impact on family carers, many of whom provide extensive, selfless support over many years.

AN INESTIMABLE COST

The level of contribution provided by family carers is staggering. However, the biggest costs are those that can't be estimated.

According to the New Zealand Institute of Economic Research's (NZIER) *Economic Burden of MS Report 2021*, commissioned by Multiple Sclerosis New Zealand (MSNZ), the total cost of MS family care contribution in 2021 was estimated to be $27.5 million. The number of hours contributed by family carers of people with MS each month ranged from 20 for a mild case, to 150 hours for a severe case – the equivalent of between 240 hours and 1,800 hours of informal, unpaid care annually.

The results of the August 2022 report *The State of Caring in Aotearoa*, from a survey undertaken by Carers NZ and the Carers Alliance, which MSNZ is a member of, highlights the impacts on family carers. Their contribution is not just economic, but also has immeasurable social and family cost.

What is also incalculable is the strain placed on the carers. Family carers have lower rates of employment than the general population, with only 21% in full-time work and 23% in part-time work. Half of all carers are forced to give up or reduce paid work, leaving many (59%) struggling to pay bills and forced to cut back on essential items such as food and heating for their family (30%).

Financial strains aside, many MS family carers face other severe impacts and challenges resulting from the range of symptoms of the condition, shouldering the burden of mobility challenges, continence needs and painful/debilitating physical symptoms, to mental health issues and grief over the condition.

Family carers are also dealing with their own grief and uncertainty. MS places a significant toll on relationships. More than 40% of family carers have

PHOTO:GETTY IMAGES

their own health conditions and disabilities, while more than 70% experience anxiety and depression.

It's little wonder, then, that 48% of carers report to be really struggling, or needing emergency respite. Respite services provide carers with a much-needed break to support their own physical and mental health and wellbeing, but there is a critical shortage of these services. This is particularly so for those under 65 or requiring hospital level care. This situation has significantly worsened since the Covid pandemic, with almost 90% of carers indicating they have had less respite since the start of the pandemic.

SUPPORTING CARERS

Supporting family carers of people with MS is essential so they continue doing the life-changing work they do. Support is not only required for the day-to-day challenges they face now, but also essential in the long-term for carers who are of working age, to allow them to earn and save for retirement. Currently, 20% of carers are not able to save at all for retirement, while 34% have had their retirement plans negatively affected.

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

Supporting MSNZ by way of a financial donation or a gift in your Will, enables the organisation to continue to provide information, advocacy and moral support for tired and overworked family carers long into the future. A donation will also allow MSNZ to work with the Carers Alliance, raising issues that impact MS family carers. Your support will help advocate for better respite systems and funding so carers can have the breaks they need to stay well, to keep going. Donations will also provide resources and education to Regional MS Societies who support family carers in their local communities.

To lend your support, visit or donate at **www.msnz.org.nz**. Or donate directly to the Multiple Sclerosis Society of New Zealand via bank account number **02-0500-0355668-00**.
For more information contact MSNZ on **0800 67 54 63** or **email info@msnz.org.nz**

7 Ways To Be Healthy On A Budget

Household costs are skyrocketing. But you can make cheaper choices that will also benefit your health

BY *Susannah Hickling*

1 DITCH THE CAR FOR SHORT JOURNEYS For local errands or meeting people, either walk or cycle. This will not only save money on fuel, it will help prevent you from becoming too sedentary. Inactivity has been called the 'silent killer' and linked to conditions like heart disease, stroke and type 2 diabetes.

2 GO TO BED AN HOUR EARLIER Lighting and electronics, including TVs, laptops and game consoles, account for around 30 per cent of your electricity usage. So going to bed earlier could save you money.

Getting adequate sleep makes you less stressed and puts you in a

ILLUSTRATIONS: GETTY IMAGES

better mood, as well as bolstering your immune system and helping to protect you from heart disease, diabetes and dementia. Research has even shown that people who go to bed later gain more weight.

3 GET FIT ON THE CHEAP

There's no need to pay for expensive gym memberships or classes. The internet is a rich resource for videos on activities as varied as yoga, high intensity or low-impact workouts, Pilates and dance.

If you want to get more fresh air, then opt for brisk walking or running (invest in the right footwear) or cycling.

Being outdoors in nature is also good for your mental health.

> **EGGS, CANNED FISH, PLANT-BASED 'MEATS' AND DRIED BEANS AND PULSES ARE INEXPENSIVE AND NUTRITIOUS**

4 TURN THE HEATING DOWN A NOTCH

We don't want anyone to be living in a cold home, but many of us keep our thermostats higher than necessary. A room that's too hot can dry out sinuses and cause skin problems, dry eyes and dehydration, which can trigger headaches.

According to the World Health Organization, 18°C is the ideal temperature for healthy, adequately dressed people.

5 CUT BACK ON THE BOOZE

Given that a bottle of wine adds $15 or more to your shopping bill, now would seem like a good time to refocus on the recommended limits. New Zealand Alcohol Guidelines recommend no more than two standard drinks per day for women (and no more than ten per week, and have at least two alcohol-free days per week). For men this is no more than three standard drinks per day (and no more than 15 per week and at least two alcohol-free days per week). .

6 DRINK WATER

Soft drinks are often high in sugar. Opt for water instead, which is vital for keeping your mind and body functioning properly.

7 MAKE SMART FOOD SWAPS

Meat is expensive so substitute it for other, cheaper forms of protein a couple of times a week. Eggs, canned fish, plant-based 'meats' and dried beans and pulses are inexpensive and nutritious. Buy cheaper frozen or canned vegetables instead of fresh – they're usually just as good for you. Skip highly processed foods, such as biscuits and ready meals, as these are often high in fat and salt. Choose simple, fresh ingredients you can cook yourself.

Beware Carer BURNOUT

Many people look after a loved one, but it can take a toll on your mental and physical health

BY *The Editors*

KNOW THE SIGNS Caring can be very stressful, so be alert to the warning signs that it's all getting too much. Anxiety or feeling unhappy most of the time, being angry or irritable, including with the person you're looking after, exhaustion, eating too much or too little, resorting to alcohol to calm yourself and sleep problems should all ring alarm bells. There may be physical signs too, ranging from feeling dizzy or breathless to cramps and chest pains.

TALK ABOUT IT Accept your feelings – you're perfectly entitled to feel negative about your situation – and discuss them with family and friends. Have someone you can vent to. Consider joining a local carers' group. As well as sharing experiences, you may also find it useful in getting information about ways in which you might get a break from caring. Contact your GP if you feel it's affecting your health.

DO ONE THING AT A TIME Try to tackle one task at a time, and be prepared to say no sometimes.

HAVE A LIST OF BACK-UP CARERS You can't be expected to carry the whole burden of caring. Try to organise a small network of people who can help out from time to time. There are also organisations that offer respite care.

DON'T IGNORE YOUR OWN LIFE Ministering to the needs of someone can be all-engulfing. But make sure you nurture your own relationships. Make a date – a regular one if possible – with your significant other or with a good friend, or commit time to an activity and stick to it. The important thing is to schedule in some 'me time', however brief.

EXERCISE EVERY DAY Physical activity is a great stress reliever and will mitigate the effects of burnout.

ILLUSTRATION: VECTEEZY.COM

News From The

WORLD OF MEDICINE

TURBOCHARGING THE FLU SHOT

Vaccines tend to be less effective for older people, who often have a weaker immune response. In a recent Australian review published in the peer-reviewed journal *PLOS One*, people who exercised near the time of a flu shot tended to show higher antibody responses.

These effects were especially pronounced for participants who exercised the same arm that had received the jab. Strength training causes a helpful kind of muscle damage that heals back stronger while releasing molecules that may signal danger to the immune system, thus activating it and boosting the vaccine.

AN EARLY RED FLAG FOR PARKINSON'S

According to researchers from the University of Birmingham, older men who had nightmares at least once a week were twice as likely to develop Parkinson's disease. This symptom tended to show up a few years before more obvious ones, such as tremors.

BRISK WALKING SLOWS AGEING

A study by the University of Leicester involving nearly 475,000 adults found that fast walkers – with a pace of more than 6.4 kilometres per hour – could be expected to live about 16 years longer than slow walkers.

SMARTER WAYS TO CONTROL ASTHMA FLARE-UPS

After noticing their neighbourhood had a high rate of asthma-related hospitalisations, researchers at Queen Mary University of London decided to discover why. They found their answer in the records of over 30,000 asthma patients. A quarter of them were prescribed six or more rescue inhalers in a year. While this device saves lives, using it too often can increase severe attacks.

To avoid this scenario, doctors prescribed an additional puffer known as a maintenance inhaler. When used regularly and properly, the inhaler helps control inflammation in the airways and prevent asthma flare-ups from happening in the first place.

ILLUSTRATION: GETTY IMAGES

Alternatives to Hearing Aids Take Off: New TV Soundbar Speaker Beats Expensive Hearing Aids.

Frustrated television listeners are now putting their hearing aids to the side for TV viewing, with the release of New Zealand's first TV hearing-aid soundbar by TV Voice Pro. The soundbar automatically clarifies hard-to-hear TV speech and dialogue, with no need for the use of a traditional hearing aid, or even the need for a hearing test.

Hearing specialist Don Hudson says up to 70% of hearing aid wearers, including those with sets of hearing aids worth thousands of dollars, still report significant difficulty hearing TV dialogue, and are regularly missing out on much of their favourite TV programs, or attempting to solve the problem by increasing the TV volume to loud levels, to the detriment of others in the home.

> "Hearing TV dialogue clearly is a significant problem for those with hearing loss. The problem starts with the clarity of the TV audio itself which is highly variable, as many channels differ dramatically in the clarity of the dialogue, and the volume is often changing between programs and advertisements too. We know as hearing specialists that hearing aids struggle to correct this problem, as the problem originates with how the audio has been mixed for each TV program."

Unlike traditional hearing aids, the *TV Voice Pro Soundbar* accesses the TV audio directly, and utilises a speech enhancement formula based on the analysis of thousands of audiograms (hearing tests results) of those with hearing loss, and automatically reconfigures the TV audio to a speech enhanced sound quality, suitable for those with mild to severe hearing loss.

> "We found that one of the significant factors preventing regular TV speakers and soundbars from clarifying TV audio for those with hearing loss is that they focus on surround sound and music/sound effects to such an extent that it is often equal in volume or even louder than the dialogue.
>
> Unfortunately for someone with even a mild degree of hearing loss, these effects will often mask the dialogue out completely, particularly for movies, and also for shows where various accents are involved. With the *TV Voice Pro Soundbar*, although sound effects and music are still audible, the soundbar makes speech and dialogue enhancement the priority for all TV audio, and this is how we have solved the problem."

Users of the *TV Voice Pro Soundbar* can select from three speech clarifying sound settings via the soundbar remote control, and have further access to clarify TV dialogue to suit their hearing needs if they wish, by simply increasing or decreasing the treble or bass. The soundbar will automatically remember the user's preference for TV sound clarity.

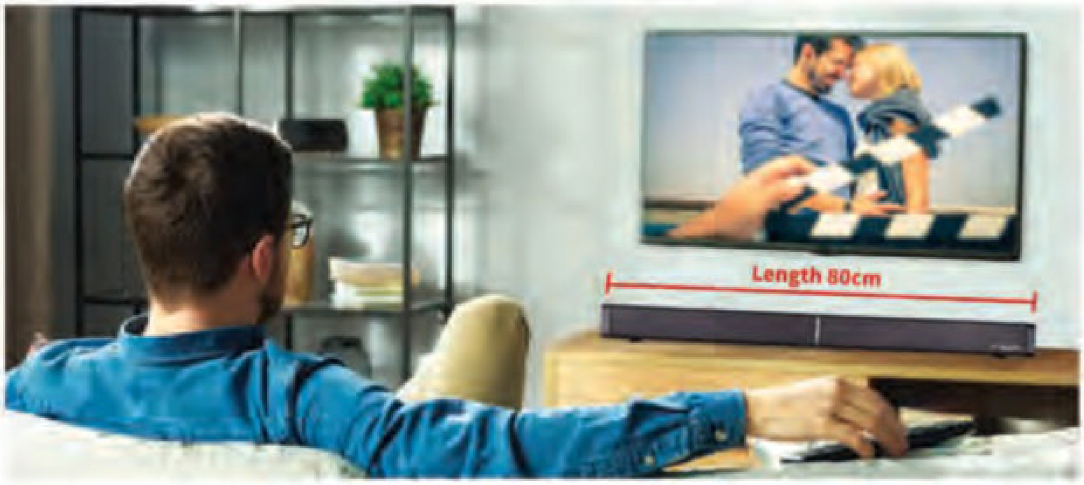
The *TV Voice Pro Soundbar* has been designed as a sleek 80cm-long audio speaker which can sit below your TV on any hard surface, or be mounted. What's truly exceptional is that customers can even order the new *TV Voice Pro Soundbar* as a package with the already well-known TV Voice Pro wireless earphones. Hearing specialist Don Hudson says,

> "A really unique benefit is that the new *TV Voice Pro Soundbar* can operate in unison with any of the TV Voice Pro wireless earphone options. This offers TV listeners the best of both worlds, allowing them to either listen to TV in private with lightweight earphones that clarify TV dialogue, or instead with the soundbar turned on when others are in the room. We have designed the products so that they can be used in unison on the same TV, or alternatively, many of our customers choose to use the *TV Voice Pro Soundbar* in their main living room for TV listening, and the TV Voice Pro wireless earphones on a separate TV in the household, such as in the bedroom. This guarantees they will hear TV speech and dialogue clearly no matter which TV they are using."

The *TV Voice Pro Soundbar* and the TV Voice Pro wireless earphones are simple to use and can be connected to any TV in under 2 minutes.

The soundbar can be purchased on its own for $595, or as a package with a set of TV Voice Pro wireless earphones for $964. All TV Voice Pro products are guaranteed to connect to any TV, new or old.

TV Voice Pro products come with a 30-day money back guarantee and free express delivery anywhere in New Zealand. To order call (09) 222 4593 or order online at www.TvVoicePro.co.nz



ENTERTAINMENT

SILENCE Is A Question Of RESPECT

Actor Liam Neeson on action and ambition, reading and life's lessons

BY *Rüdiger Sturm*

Almost 30 years ago, his portrayal of Oskar Schindler in Steven Spielberg's *Schindler's List* made Liam Neeson a Hollywood star. Since then, the Northern Ireland native has repeatedly taken on artistically demanding roles as well as action films.

The now 70 year old will soon be appearing in a new film, *Marlowe*, where he plays the main character – a rough-hewn sleuth who is hired by a beautiful woman to find her missing lover.

As the legendary detective Marlowe, in one action scene you say: "I'm too old for this c**p..."

That was improvised. That line wasn't in the script.

Does that mean you feel too old to do strenuous shoots?

No, not at all. My perception is that I'm still in my mid-30s. I also like to let off steam, that's why I love shooting fight scenes and stunts. That's why I keep myself physically fit. Mental fitness is even more important.

PHOTO: STEPHANE CARDINALE - CORBIS/GETTYIMAGES

Neeson was nominated for an Academy Award for Best Actor in a Leading Role for his portrayal of Oskar Schindler

PHOTO: AJ PICS/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

What do you do for your mental fitness?
I read all kinds of literature. At times I study books on physics or other natural sciences. Then I'll pick up great classics like Victor Hugo or Dostoyevsky, or I return to crime novels. Henning Mankell is one of my all-time favourite authors. I make sure I pick up my e-reader every day. It's my constant companion.

Does this reading give you insights that help in life?
It sure does. It starts with all the sayings about living in the moment and not worrying about the future. For me, that's an important principle. I also remember a quote from the Persian poet and mystic Rumi: "Silence is the language of God, and everything else is just translation." That spoke to me a lot. I think it's important to be silent for a change. We should take the time to focus on what other people have to say. It's also a matter of respecting our fellow human beings. I try to practise that every day.

Do you believe in God? After all, you grew up as an Irish Catholic.
Unfortunately, I fell away from the faith, although it never completely leaves you. I would say I'm spiritual, I'm definitely less religious than I used to be. What I don't believe in is heaven

and hell, and certainly not purgatory. I don't have answers to the big questions, such as life after death. I think that we all have an inner energy that doesn't dissolve, but goes somewhere. But I have no idea what form it takes.

What is your idea of redemption?
I'm not sure I would use that word, but you just feel better when you do something for your fellow man. It can be a small thing – maybe just a smile for a stranger or holding the door for someone.

Your son Michéal followed in your footsteps to become an actor. What advice did you give him?
I advised him against it, because the majority of actors are unemployed most of the time. In this profession, you're constantly faced with rejection. But acting is in his blood, because his mother [Neeson's late wife Natasha Richardson] comes from an acting dynasty that goes back to the late 18th century. It was clear that he wouldn't listen to me.

Are you looking for answers to deeper questions when choosing a movie?
No. I just love reading good scripts. There aren't that many of those. And the script is the basis for everything. From that point of view, I consider myself very lucky that I'm still being offered good stories at my age, for example, a cleverly crafted thriller like *Marlowe*.

You said you appreciate peace and quiet. How do you find both being a busy actor?
I'm lucky enough to have a house outside New York with a lot of land that's partly wooded and with animals. I love going for walks there. I am very quiet, I only hear my own heartbeat, my breath and the sounds of nature. R

LIAM NEESON
FAST FACTS

- Liam Neeson was born in Northern Ireland on June 7, 1952.
- After various theatre roles, he had his breakthrough in cinema in 1981 with *Excalibur*, a King Arthur film.
- He became known internationally in 1993 with the title role in Steven Spielberg's *Schindler's List*, for which he was nominated for an Academy Award.
- In recent years he has enjoyed success as an action star in films such as *96 Hours* as well as roles in character dramas.
- In 1994 he married his colleague Natasha Richardson, daughter of famous actor Vanessa Redgrave and director Tony Richardson.
- Neeson's wife died in 2009 as a result of a skiing accident.
- The couple has two adult sons.

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Beware Of BUTTON BATTERIES

Parents and grandparents take note: these tiny cells can be deadly for kids

BY *Lisa Fields*

PHOTOS: (KEY, SELFIE STICK) GETTY IMAGES; (HANDS, REMOTE, BATTERIES) SHUTTERSTOCK

Moments after three-and-a half-year-old Mio Vettenterä accidentally swallowed the button battery from his family's selfie stick in 2016, he ran crying to his mother, Minttu, to tell her. Alarmed, Minttu brought him to their local emergency room in Riihimäki, a town in southern Finland.

An X-ray showed that the battery had lodged in Mio's oesophagus, but the hospital didn't have the right tools to remove it. By the time doctors at a second hospital got the battery out, seven hours had passed, and it had severely damaged the boy's oesophagus and burned a hole in his trachea. He required 20 reconstructive surgeries to his oesophagus – most of them in that first year – and for a few months had to be fed through a tube. Now age ten, Mio's oesophagus must be monitored for scar-tissue build-up, which could impact his ability to eat comfortably.

Since Mio's ordeal, Minttu says "so many people have told me that they never realised just how dangerous those batteries are."

Little Mio accidentally swallowing a button battery is not a remote occurrence. It happens to other children surprisingly often and now, government regulators around the world are taking action to prevent button battery injuries.

ONE OF THE MAIN ISSUES WITH BUTTON BATTERIES IS THAT THEY ARE EASY TO ACCESS

Tucked away in many everyday items – including TV remote controls, car key fobs, hearing aids, musical greeting cards and fitness watches – button batteries go largely unnoticed, but we should not ignore them. While these items power some of our most common devices, they have been known to be very dangerous when they fall into the wrong hands.

Round and flat, the silvery coin-like batteries can be particularly fascinating to preschoolers, who may be tempted to pop them in their mouths.

"They are tiny, shiny and similar in size to some sweets, making them very attractive to young children," says Delia Rickard, deputy chair of the Australian Competition & Consumer Commission. "If swallowed, a button battery can get stuck in a child's throat and cause a chemical reaction that burns through tissue, causing death or serious injury."

This kind of catastrophic scenario is a growing concern in many countries, due to the increasing presence of button batteries. Much more energy is being packed into much smaller batteries, says Hans Craen, secretary general of the European Portable Battery Association (EPBA) in Brussels. "And we've seen an increase in items that require them."

The National Safety Council in the US has identified that the number of serious injuries or deaths as a result of button batteries has increased nine-fold in the last decade. And the younger the child, the higher the risk.

"The zero-to-five age group is more likely to experience battery-related problems compared to the older kids or adults," says Dr Madhavan Ramaswamy, a clinical fellow on the tracheal team at Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children in London.

It's difficult to know exactly how many children sustain injuries or die each year from having ingested button batteries, because reporting isn't required in most countries.

Still, according to Dr Ramaswamy, the Great Ormond Street Hospital for

Children reports seeing about one child per month with significant internal burns caused by swallowing a button battery. In the Netherlands, roughly 15 children are injured and two die from button battery ingestion each year. And in Australia, three children have died since 2017 and one child per month is seriously injured.

One of the main issues is that these batteries are easy to access. While items marketed to children, like toys, have compartments that screw shut, many everyday devices – including LED lights, calculators and glucometers – do not. Without those, children can pry batteries free, or batteries can fall out if the device is dropped.

A lack of education about the risks is also a big hurdle: many adults leave used batteries lying around, wrongly assuming that they aren't harmful.

DIFFICULT TO DIAGNOSE

One reason young children sustain button-battery injuries is their narrow oesophagi. If an older child or adult swallows a button battery, it's less likely to become lodged; it can then pass freely into and through the child's digestive system.

When a button battery does get caught in the oesophagus, it presses against delicate tissue while also coming in contact with saliva. The liquid activates the battery's current and forms hydroxide, which burns the oesophagus and causes tissue damage.

Beware Of Button Batteries

Just a few of the items that require button batteries: watches, hearing aids and key fobs for vehicles

PHOTOS: (WATCH, HEARING AID) GETTY IMAGES; (KEY) SHUTTERSTOCK

PREVENTING INJURY AND FATALITIES

- Keep button batteries out of reach and sight on a high shelf in a cabinet.
- Safely dispose of used ones. If your community doesn't have specialised drop-off areas and you must put batteries in your garbage bin, be sure to secure them between two large strips of clear tape in case they catch a child's eye. That makes them less easy to swallow.
- When you buy products that use button batteries, ensure the battery cover is properly secured.
- Do your best to know which of your devices require button batteries and where they are in your house; store these devices out of reach of small children.
- If a battery is missing and you suspect your child ingested it, head to the nearest hospital immediately.

All button batteries contain lithium, alkaline, silver oxide or zinc. In recent years, more devices have required the lithium kind, which have numerous advantages, including excellent energy-to-weight ratios and a slower loss of charge when not in use. However, lithium batteries' bigger size – often 20 millimetres or larger – and the fact that they release more energy make them more dangerous if swallowed.

The immediate side effects of one getting stuck are coughing, vomiting, wheezing, drooling and difficulty swallowing, but because these are things children commonly do, it can be difficult to pinpoint that the child is reacting to a battery.

"There are no symptoms that are exclusive to swallowing a button battery," Dr Ramaswamy says. "And when the kids are of non-verbal age, they may be crying, they may be in discomfort, but they can't actually tell you there's something hurting in their throat or that it's burning."

The European Society for Paediatric Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Nutrition (ESPGHAN) recommends removing a button battery within two hours of ingestion. However, when parents aren't aware of what's happened, it may stay in the child's throat for hours or even days.

"If a button battery goes through the oesophageal wall, then very soon it damages the trachea or one of the big arteries, like the aorta," says Dr Lissy de Ridder, an author of ESPGHAN's position paper on button battery ingestion and a paediatric gastroenterologist at Sophia Children's Hospital/Erasmus Medical Centre in Rotterdam, Netherlands. "If it burns a hole in the aorta, then a child may quickly bleed to death."

If there is any suspicion that a child has swallowed a button battery, get to an emergency department as quickly as possible, so doctors can take X-rays.

RAISING AWARENESS

Prompted by child injuries and fatalities, in June last year, Australia became the first country in the world to enact safety and information standards to reduce the risk of harm from button batteries. Battery manufacturers and suppliers are now required to use child-resistant packaging and warning labels, and must create secure compartments for products containing button batteries sold in Australia.

In Europe, EPBA and ESPGHAN have partnered to raise awareness about the dangers of button battery ingestion and to have an impact on legislation and safety standards. The UK introduced additional safety requirements in 2021, and in the US a bill demanding extra safety standards became law in August 2022.

"To change legislation, you need robust lobbying, like in the US and Australia," says Dr Christos Tzivinikos, a member of ESPGHAN's button battery task force and head of the paediatric gastroenterology section at Al Jalila Children's Specialty Hospital in Dubai. "Building on the important groundwork around safety standards that the EPBA has done, we are now also lobbying strongly in Europe. We just need to drive our efforts even further – and that's what ESPGHAN has been trying to do."

For now, the industry is enacting some change on its own. Reputable battery manufacturers already sell button batteries in child-resistant packaging across Europe, according to Craen. And some are investigating whether additional measures could help. Possible ideas include coating batteries with a bitter substance so that children spit them out, and incorporating a dye that will colour the child's mouth or tongue upon ingestion to tip off parents.

In the meantime, widespread awareness of the hazards of button batteries is crucial to avoid further tragedies.

As Dr de Ridder says, "There are millions of batteries around the world already. Selling the new ones in a protected seal doesn't do the job on its own." R

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Creepy Doll

A British husband-and-wife team who run the Museum of Haunted Objects from their home in Yorkshire claim their Annabelle Raggedy Ann is 'possessed' after watching CCTV footage showing it moving out of its display cabinet. METRO.CO.UK

BOOST YOUR IMMUNE SYSTEM

SEVEN SCIENCE-BACKED SOLUTIONS TO HELP YOU FEEL YOUR BEST

BY *Lisa Bendall*
WITH ADDITIONAL RESEARCH FROM *Lorraine Shah*

ILLUSTRATIONS BY **RYAN SNOOK**

PHOTO: (WOMAN) CHRIS ROBINSON

SACHIN OZA always seemed to catch whatever cold and flu germs were flying around. Despite being only in his mid-30s, he felt out of shape and out of sorts. He realised that if he didn't make some changes, his immune function would continue to worsen with age. "I have a family background of diabetes, high cholesterol and heart disease," says Oza. "I had to take action."

But Oza's lifestyle stood in the way. He clocked long days working in finance, with little opportunity to be active or focus on his wellbeing. His commute from his home to the office was stressful and time-consuming, and he was spending far too many hours stuck behind his desk.

Oza's increasingly sedentary lifestyle had repercussions. In addition to catching bugs easily, he didn't sleep well, his body ached and he felt lethargic. "My immune system was really weak," recalls Oza. "I knew that I shouldn't be feeling this way before even hitting 40."

So began a 15-year journey to overhaul his health. He implemented some changes to his diet. He introduced more raw fruit and vegetables and cut down on junk food. He started going for runs, and began interval training, resistance training and stretching. He also became interested in mindfulness, practising deep-breathing and meditation.

Now 49, Oza feels like a new man. "I catch colds far less frequently than before," he says. His aches and pains have eased, his stress levels are lower, and he sleeps soundly. "I no longer wake up in the early hours, which has made a huge difference in how I feel."

There are many factors affecting the immune system that we can't control – ageing weakens our immune function, for example, and we have individual genetic differences that affect how we deal with disease. Malnutrition (from a dwindling appetite or a disorder like coeliac disease) or physical immobility (due to bed rest or a temporary injury) also impair our immunity.

In addition, sometimes a weak immune system is a red flag for more serious medical conditions or other problems that should be looked into by a doctor. They can include

PHOTO: (PLATE) ISTOCK.COM

recurring digestive issues, getting unusual illnesses that those close to you don't catch, having slow-healing scrapes and cuts, and catching new illnesses before you've recovered from the previous ones.

Still, Oza has reason to be hopeful that he'll combat diseases better as he begins his sixth decade. As scientists are discovering, certain lifestyle changes can improve the body's ability to fight illness and infection.

OUR IMMUNE FUNCTION is incredibly complex. "We're still struggling to understand it," says Dr Donald Vinh, an infectious-disease specialist and medical microbiologist at McGill University. "We've made progress in the last 50 years, but it's a young field."

Compared to the cardiovascular system or respiratory function, the human immune system has a plethora of nuts and bolts. These include antibodies, organs, proteins and enzymes. There are also lymphocytes, a type of white blood cell, which include natural killer cells (these attack infected cells) and memory cells (B and T lymphocytes designed to remember and do battle with a germ if it ever returns).

Aspects of our immune system are found throughout our bodies, from our skin to our brains. Even the mucous in our lungs and the acid in our stomachs are part of our body's defences.

All of these moving parts complement each other. Some are tools we're born with, already primed to recognise and attack certain invaders – known as innate immunity. Others are instruments for figuring out how to defend against bugs we encounter for the first time, called adaptive immunity.

Because of this complexity, anyone seeking a quick fix or miracle pill is out of luck. "People think they can just boost the immune system as if it were a muscle, but it's far from that simple," notes Dr Vinh.

But like any bodily function, immunity works best when we support our general health – and researchers around the world are getting closer to exposing more links between the choices we make and how well our immune systems work. Here are seven practical approaches that are proven to show some results.

HAVE YOUR SHOTS

When it comes to powering up the immune system, vaccines are the most important breakthrough in history. Childhood vaccinations, for example, have been a key factor in our longer lifespan today. Even before COVID-19, vaccinations against diseases like flu and measles were saving four to five million lives a year, according to the World Health Organization. "Vaccines don't fix all problems, but they're profoundly effective," Dr Vinh says.

A vaccine provides a training session for our adaptive immunity, showing it how to fight an invader it's never seen before. "After the vaccine, you'll have antibodies already made, so when you see the bug, you're prearmed and ready," Dr Vinh explains, adding that researchers are developing drugs to try to boost innate immunity, as well.

WATCH WHAT YOU EAT

Inflammation, a chemical cascade that's a critical part of our immune response, also has a dark side. When it's helping, inflammation traps viruses and bacteria by triggering fluid and swelling. It also aids in healing by calling for a clean-up crew of specialised white blood cells called phagocytes.

But inflammation is also triggered by glucose and fats, and if it's constant, it can wreak havoc on your body – causing health problems such as diabetes, liver disease and cardiovascular disease. Refined carbs, like white flour and sugar-sweetened drinks, have long been linked to higher levels of inflammation in the body.

"Having junk food once in a while isn't going to impact your health," says nutritionist Charlotte Debeugny. "But if it features consistently in your diet, you're in danger of it replacing the healthier foods and nutrients that you need for your immune system."

Many studies draw a connection between nutrition and immune function. In 2021, Harvard researchers rated the eating habits of almost 600,000 people and found that those whose diets placed the most emphasis on plant-based foods had a 41 per cent lower risk of getting severely ill with COVID-19 compared to those with the worst diets.

Should we use dietary supplements? For most of us, even as we age, a balanced and varied diet gives us most of the nutrients and micronutrients we need. But in rare cases, vitamin deficiencies can interfere with immune function. If you're vegan, you should take a vitamin B12 supplement, and if you aren't getting a lot of sun exposure, you may require vitamin D. To determine if you have a deficiency, get a blood test.

GET MOVING

It's been established that people without much mobility, or those who never exercise, have less resistance to bugs. Regular moderate physical activity, on the other hand, optimises immune function. And it doesn't take much. A US study of almost 50,000 people with COVID-19 infections found that those with inactive lifestyles had a higher risk of hospitalisation, while people who exercised, even a bit, were more likely to get better on their own.

In an experiment published in 2018 by Duke University's School of Medicine, inactive seniors with rheumatoid arthritis improved their innate immunity and lowered inflammation by adding 30-minute exercise sessions three times a week. Researchers are looking into why, but in 2021 a paper in *Nature* revealed a clue, showing that walking and running stimulate the production of B and T lymphocytes in the bones.

Avoid going to extremes, though; some research shows that prolonged, marathon-style physical exertion may disrupt our normal immune function. Aim for ten to 30 minutes of exercise every day to get the immune benefits.

Oza, who today runs an oil and gas company, has built daily activity into his routine. "I now work from home, which makes it much easier to fit exercise into my day," he says. "I run four times a week."

PHOTOS: (SHOES, PILLOW) ISTOCKPHOTO.COM/PAPERKITES

DRINK LESS ALCOHOL AND MORE WATER

Alcohol negatively affects the immune system in a variety of ways. Excessive drinkers, for example, can have a higher risk of pneumonia and they take longer to recover from injuries and infections.

If you're a regular drinker, Debeugny suggests trying lower-alcohol brands, having a glass of water after each drink, increasing the ratio of soda water in your mix, and having alcohol-free days, noting: "Sometimes it's best just to say 'Tonight, I'm not drinking'." Planning a few nights a week to be alcohol free can be a good habit for long-term liver health.

HARNESS YOUR MIND POWER

When a burst of fear or anxiety does what it's designed to do, our bodies are flooded with hormones that help us fight or flee – by raising our heart rate and blood pressure to circulate oxygen, for example. This is called the sympathetic response. Then our parasympathetic response kicks in, slowing our heart rate and relaxing us. But chronic stress – from financial worries, say – means those hormones keep building and circulating, which is unhealthy.

Over time, chronic stress can sap our defences and destroy immune cells. A 2021 study at Western University in Canada, for instance, showed that one type of stress hormone, called glucocorticoids, can reduce the function of a class of T cells that fights cancer.

Dr Catherine Wikholm, a UK-based clinical psychologist, suggests that any short break from constant stress will help. "Do some activities that help to release physical tension and leave you feeling relaxed and recharged," she says. "Singing, dancing and laughing are great for reducing stress and boosting our immune system."

You can also train yourself to induce physical relaxation in your body. Try deep breathing or, better yet, do an online search for guided relaxation and learn how to clench and release muscle groups. "Deep breathing is both simple and effective," says Dr Wikholm. "It can reduce levels of stress hormones and slow down the heart rate."

HIT THE HAY

A consistently good sleep of seven to eight hours each night lowers our risk of infection and chronic inflammation. Just like exercise, sleep affects immunity in many and varied ways.

One recent study found that seniors with more sleep disruptions scored lower on cognitive tests but also had immune differences; on

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later brain autopsies, there were unhealthy changes to their microglia, immune cells in their brain tissue responsible for removing debris and battling infection.

Unfortunately, people tend to have more trouble sleeping after about age 55 because their body clocks don't work as well.

"Keeping your sleep schedule consistent is one of the most important things you can do," says Dr Wikholm. "Go to bed at around the same time each night and get up at a similar time each morning. Getting your body used to a routine makes it easier to fall asleep quickly, therefore maximising the amount of sleep you get."

BREATHE FRESH AIR

Time outdoors gives you a break from indoor air, where infectious bugs may circulate, but it also has benefits for your immune function. A bout of sunlight during the day improves your sleep rhythm at night and allows your body to produce essential vitamin D.

And it may do even more: in 2016, researchers at Georgetown University Medical Center in Washington, DC, demonstrated that the sun's rays increased the activity of T cells. Going outdoors usually leads to getting some exercise, and it's even been shown that exposure to natural environments reduces stress and anxiety.

In addition to maintaining a balanced diet and a consistent exercise regime, Oza makes a conscious effort to spend more time outside.

As time goes on, he has become even more convinced of the health benefits of the changes that he has implemented over recent years. All in all, he is gratified with his new life.

"As I enter my 50s, my immune system is in better shape than ever. Changing my lifestyle is one of the best things I have ever done." ■

SIGNS YOU NEED MORE THAN A BOOST

Sometimes a weak immune response is a red flag for more serious medical conditions or other problems. If you experience any of the following, speak with your GP:

- You get ill too often.
- You have recurring digestive issues, such as a sore stomach or diarrhoea.
- You get unusual illnesses that your friends and family members don't catch.
- Scrapes and cuts take a long time to heal.
- You seem to catch new bugs before you've recovered from the previous ones.
- Your allergy symptoms wear you down more than usual.

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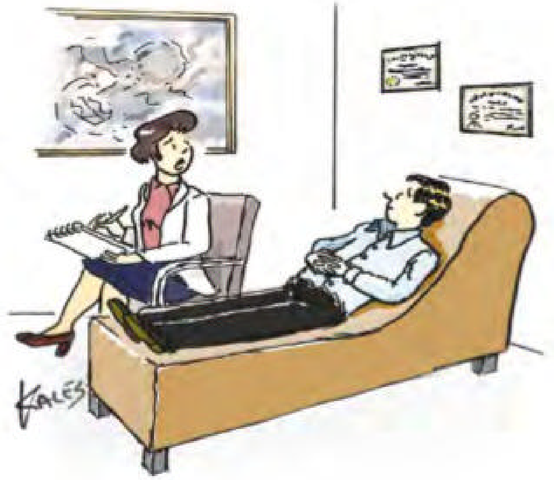
LIFE'S LIKE THAT

Seeing The Funny Side



"Let's dig deeper. What makes you use the sad emoji?"

Suits Me

Reluctant to pay $25 to have one of my husband's old suits dry cleaned, I donated it to our local charity shop. Imagine my surprise when I spotted it in the window a few days later, all spruced up and labelled as a star item. Unable to resist a bargain, I hurried inside and was more than happy to buy it back for $10.

SUBMITTED BY MAGGIE COBBETT

Not-So-Green Thumb

Did I 'kill a plant', or did the plant just not have what it takes to thrive in this fast-paced environment?

@SARAHCLAZARUS

Read The Label

An angry woman sitting next to me at a restaurant said to the waiter, "I don't know what kind of ruse you're trying to pull, but I've had soup du jour before and (points to bowl), this isn't it."

@AMYSELWYN

What Makes You Ink So?

A little girl and her mum were looking at me in the coffee shop this morning. Finally, the little girl shuffled up to me, pointed at my tattoos and asked, "Do you have to put those on by yourself every day or does your mummy help you?"

TUMBLR.COM

CARTOON: PAUL KALES; ILLUSTRATIONS: GETTY IMAGES

Not Thinking Alike

Friends of ours announced that they were getting divorced and I was shocked.

"I don't get it," I said. "They were so compatible."

My husband shrugged.

"I guess they had irreconcilable similarities."

SUBMITTED BY DIXIE RICHARDSON

Good Try

"Come on. It's time that all good little boys were in bed," I told my five year old, Samuel, as he lingered around past his bedtime.

"But Mum," he pleaded. "I haven't been very good today, have I? In fact, I'm sure I've been quite naughty."

SUBMITTED BY LUCY LASTIC

Business Of The House

My husband calls our Bluetooth speaker 'Mr Speaker' and addresses it as though we are in Parliament.

@TOKS_W

Romance In Blooms

My wife recently got cross with me because I never buy her flowers, and this was very surprising because I didn't even know that she sold flowers.

SUBMITTED BY MEHTAB BRAR

THE GREAT TWEET OFF: GET RICH QUICK SCHEMES

Twitter users' ideas they're sure will bring in the big bucks.

I'd invent an app that beeps in your pocket when you get within a few metres of someone you don't want to bump into, so you have time to turn around and find another route.

@MARLEYSHOWLER

A company that makes bouncing planes called Boeing!

@SANDIW77

Archibald. It's like Alexa, but a much less common name, so she won't think you're talking to her every time you talk to your friend Alexa.

@WALKERLOVESPETS

A combination coffee shop/law firm that specialises in divorces. It'd be called Grounds for Divorce.

@JOHNEDDIEMUSIC

SEE THE WORLD...

Turn the page ››

...DIFFERENTLY

Sea Of Birds

Gannets may be clumsy creatures on land, but they are elegant in flight. Seen here in the chilly North Sea, their hunting technique is reminiscent of a dive-bomber. With half-flattened wings and at a speed of up to 100km/h, the birds pierce through the sea's surface to catch fish and squid below. With a bit of luck, they can snatch several in a single dive, swallowing everything completely before resurfacing.

PHOTOS: ACTION PRESS/BRIAN MATTHEWS/SWNS.COM

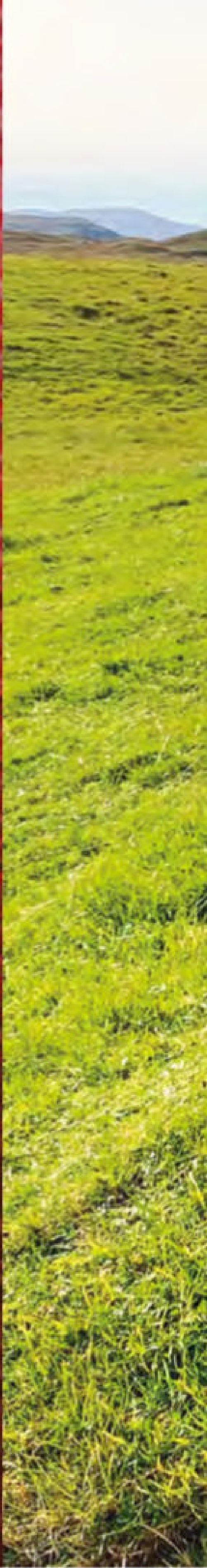
A Tweed Revival

Scottish tweed on the Outer Hebrides is experiencing a renaissance

BY *Alexander Mühlauer* FROM **SÜDDEUTSCHE ZEITUNG**

If Iain Martin looked out the window of his shed on the Scottish island of Lewis and Harris, he would see his sheep lying on the grass outside with the sea and mountains in the background. It's a radiantly beautiful morning, but he doesn't have time for this scene of idyllic charm.

PHOTOS: (THIS PAGE) ALISON JOHNSTON; (OPPOSITE) HARRIS TWEED AUTHORITY BY JACKSON TUCKER LYNCH



Today, residents of the Outer Hebrides still weave Harris Tweed by hand. In the past, plants from the islands gave it its colour

Martin, 52, with short grey hair and wearing a woollen jumper, sits in his shed with his back to the window. Stoically, he steps on a pedal with his foot. *Click clack. Click clack.*

Click clack. That's what it sounds like when Martin is working on his loom. It is the sound that has radiated throughout the course of his life, reminding him of his childhood when it dominated the airways of the island. Click clack. Back then, every neighbour had a loom to make the island's special fabric from coarse new wool. Tweed not only kept them warm, but gave them an income.

Today there aren't many around Martin who have mastered this craft. He still lives on Lewis and Harris, a Scottish island in the Outer Hebrides. Over 1300 tweed weavers were registered here in the late 1960s. Today only 229 are left.

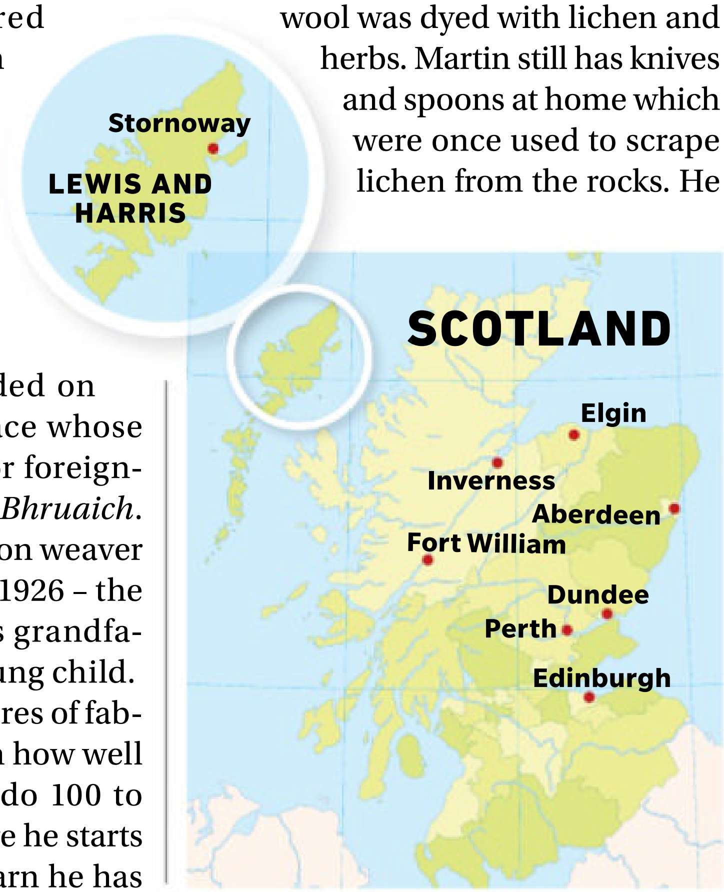
Martin's ancestors landed on the island in 1741, at a place whose Gaelic name is not easy for foreigners to pronounce: *Airidh a' Bhruaich*. Martin is a fourth-generation weaver and works on a loom from 1926 – the same loom he watched his grandfather use when he was a young child.

Martin weaves three metres of fabric per hour. Depending on how well things are going, he can do 100 to 150 metres in a week. Before he starts weaving, he shackles the yarn he has rolled onto small spindles. Martin can process six different coloured yarns at once. Some are subtle, others more conspicuous. Martin himself likes it classic. His own tweed jacket is grey, with some green and orange speckles.

A MAJOR ORDER ENDED THE CRISIS

The fabrics are in the colours of the island. The green and brown of the meadows. The blue of the sky and the sea. The grey of the rocks. The orange, red and purple of the flowers that bloom in spring and summer.

In the past, when there were no factories, the freshly sheared sheep's wool was dyed with lichen and herbs. Martin still has knives and spoons at home which were once used to scrape lichen from the rocks. He



SEAFORTH HARRIS TWEED

The idyllic location where Iain Martin lives and weaves

kept them and now shows them to customers who visit.

He was recently visited by an American who works in London and who had come to see where and how the tweed for his suit was made. The customer then took the fabric to a shop on London's Savile Row, where the United Kingdom's most famous tailors work.

First the weaving, then the tailoring, that takes a few weeks. "The wait is worth it," says Martin. "After all, you then own a piece of clothing that you can wear all your life."

A tweed suit is something that won't go out of style anytime soon. Especially not in Great Britain, where the cloth has become popular again in recent years. This is partly due to popular television series such as *Downton Abbey*, which tells the fate of a noble family and their staff at the beginning of the 20th century. Well-dressed people in tweed also appear in *The Crown* and *Peaky Blinders*.

Things haven't always gone as well for the weavers in the Outer Hebrides though. In the early 2000s, the island's tweed industry was on the brink of collapse as demand tapered off, and many younger people considered tweed to be old-fashioned.

But then something happened that Iain Martin calls the 'Nike boom.' One March day in 2004, Nike, the sporting goods company, contacted Donald John Mackay, a weaver on the island. The brief: Mackay was to produce 950 metres of tweed for a shoe reissue. No problem for Mackay. Or so he thought. But someone at Nike had made a typo: a zero was missing, the company wanted 9500 metres. And in eight weeks. Mackay couldn't do that. At

PHOTOS: (ABOVE) ALISON JOHNSTON; MAP: GETTY IMAGES

Iain Martin works with a loom from 1926, the same one his grandfather used

least not alone. And so he mobilised all the islanders who could still weave.

Iain Martin took part. "Suddenly we were back in business," he says. "If John Mackay and Nike hadn't existed, our industry would probably have died out completely."

The Tweed Mill, in which new wool used to be spun three days a week, increased its production to seven. At last the weavers had work again. But the 'Terminator Nike' sneaker was just the beginning of the new tweed boom. Suddenly, emissaries from major fashion houses in Paris and Milan came to the island to buy tweed fabric.

Nike turned to a tweed weaver in the Outer Hebrides because of the island's special fabric weaving reputation and history. Harris Tweed has been a registered trademark in the United Kingdom since 1910. For a long time, quality control was the responsibility of the Harris Tweed Association, a traders' association that is also responsible for marketing the fabric. In 1993, the British Parliament passed the Harris Tweed Act which states: "Harris Tweed is a fabric handwoven by the islanders of Lewis, Harris, Uist and Barra in their homes from pure new wool, dyed and spun in the Outer Hebrides."

Since then, the Harris Tweed Authority has been responsible for ensuring compliance with the law. It is based at the port of Stornoway, the largest town in the archipelago and home to around 7000 inhabitants. The imposing brick building with the red doors and windows stands out from the row of houses by the harbour – a testament to the importance that Tweed has on the islands.

HARRIS TWEED – THE GENUINE BRAND

Thanks to the Harris Tweed Act, self-employed weavers like Martin are entitled to have their finished woven fabric washed by one of the island's mills. This essential process ensures all remaining oil residues

PHOTO: ALISON JOHNSTON

from the loom are removed from the fabric. Once the washing is completed, a stamp is ironed onto the fabric, identifying it as genuine Harris Tweed. The trademark consists of the Maltese cross and an orb. Every Harris Tweed garment comes with this certificate of authenticity.

Martin prides himself on the legal protections his craft enjoys. To pay him a visit, head south from Stornoway until you see a handwritten sign: ‘Seaforth Harris Tweed’. At the end of the path is Martin’s shed. In the house next door he has some handmade souvenirs placed on a table for sale: soft toys, cushions and Christmas baubles, all made of tweed.

A YARN USUALLY CONSISTS OF DIFFERENT COLOURS, SUCH AS YELLOW AND TWO SHADES OF BROWN

From here you can look out over the ‘sleeping beauty’ of Loch Seaforth, which stretches inland to the mountains beyond, where 500 sheep graze. Martin doesn’t know whether anyone will take over his work as a tweed weaver. He has no children, but his nieces and nephews sometimes help him on weekends. “They have to decide if they want to weave,” he says, sounding like he still holds out some hope.

It’s a good 45 minutes by car from Martin’s shed to the tweed factory in Shawbost. Not only are the weavers’ fabrics washed and stamped with the Harris Tweed logo at the Tweed Mill, this is where the weavers get their yarn from.

Margaret Macleod, 46, wearing a dark blue tweed blazer, is sales manager for Harris Tweed Hebrides. That’s the name of the company that runs the factory, with 70 employees and another 100 self-employed weavers.

Macleod regularly takes visitors through the spinning mill, starting at the beginning of the manufacturing process where the new wool is washed and dried. Then the wool is placed in large vats filled with dye and agitated until it turns the right colour. The dye recipes are a tightly held secret.

In the end, a yarn usually consists of different colours, such as yellow and two different shades of brown. Then, it is gradually spun with the help of automatic machines.

After that, the spools of thread are put in a basket, packed into plastic bags and delivered to the weavers. Each bag contains a note with the exact instructions of what is to be woven on behalf of the customer.

Today, 60 per cent of the island’s tweed fabrics are exported to the US, Japan and the European Union. The

HAND WOVEN
Harris Tweed
THE HARRIS TWEED ASSOCIATION LTD
REGISTERED TRADE MARK
APPLIED IN ACCORDANCE WITH REGULATIONS APPROVED BY THE BOARD OF TRADE
LIGHT
WEIGHT
HARRIS TWEED
COMPLETELY PRODUCED IN THE OUTER HEBRIDES FROM PURE SCOTTISH WOOL
by
Royal Seal
NIKE

rest is destined for the market in the UK. In 2020, Harris Tweed Hebrides achieved annual sales of £6 million (NZ$11.5 million). Macleod says she is careful to develop new products alongside the classic tweed jackets. To show me what she means, she pulls out a dark blue tweed ski jacket from the Italian men's fashion brand Stone Island.

Macleod hopes that despite the ongoing pandemic and Brexit, the tweed industry will remain competitive.

Weaver Ian Mackay, 50, sits in his shed a few minutes from the spinning mill. He views the future slightly differently: "I can weave as much as I want, but if the marketing and PR aren't right, it doesn't help me at all."

Unlike Iain Martin, Mackay's loom was manufactured in the early 1990s. He not only works with more weave colours, he also works faster.

Mackay has been weaving since he was 16 and has weathered the highs and lows of the tweed industry. During the downturns, he's worked odd

PHOTOS: (TRADEMARK) URBANIMAGES/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO; (SNEAKERS) LOS ANGELES TIMES VIA GETTY IMAGES/BOB CHAMBERLIN

Above left: Harris Tweed clothing carries a certificate of authenticity. Left: Thanks to this sneaker, the renaissance of the heritage fabric began. Above: Yarn is drawn onto rolls in the spinning mill

PHOTO: (LOOM) HARRIS TWEED AUTHORITY
BY JACKSON TUCKER LYNCH

jobs, repairing machines and working as a firefighter. Fortunately, he hasn't had to resort to that for ten years.

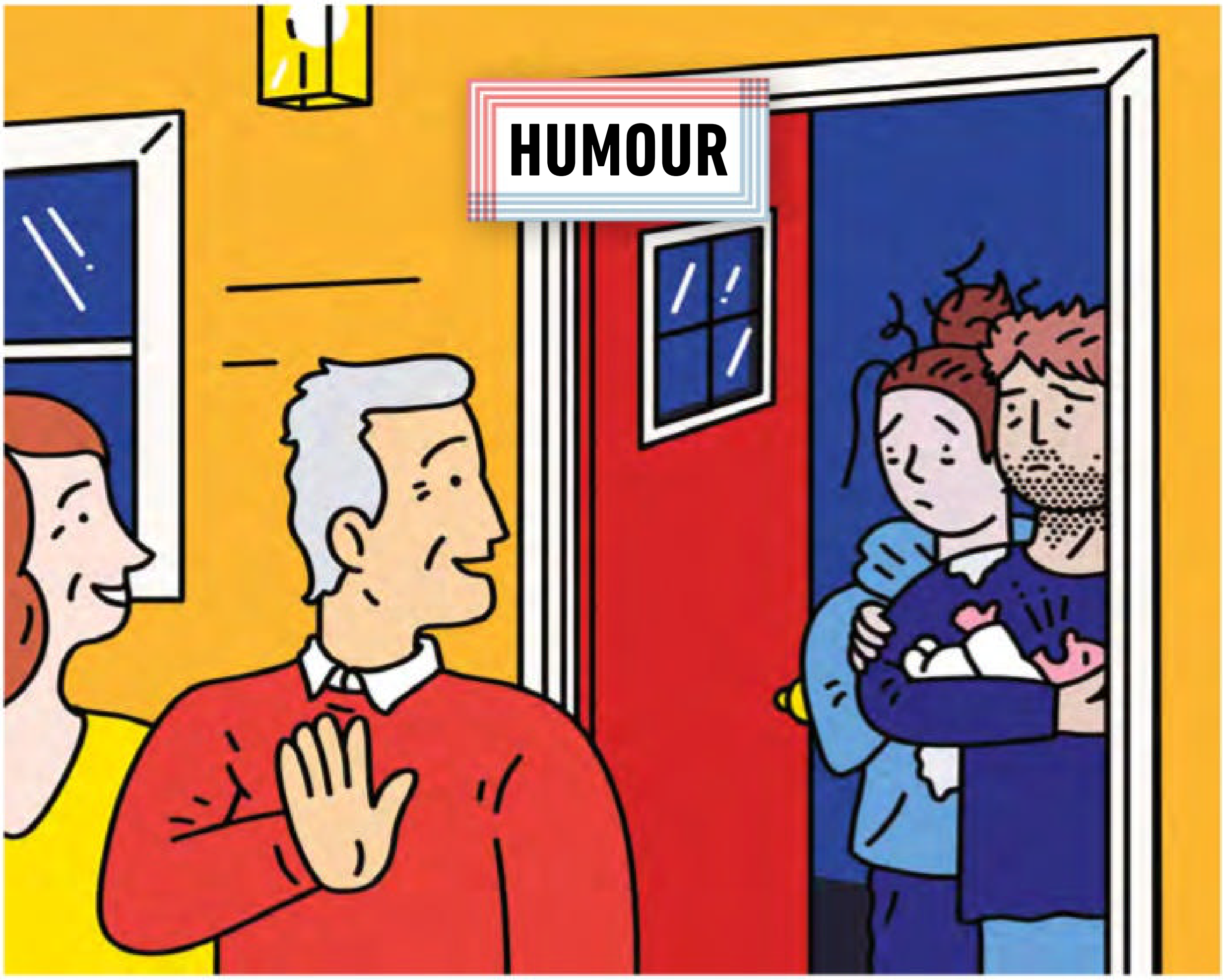
Today, he steps into the pedals of his loom much like he's about to ride a bike. Mackay loves the sound of weaving. But the click clack is not as loud in his shed as it is in Martin's shed.

Mackay can pretty much identify which country the tweed he's working on is destined for.

"Americans and Europeans prefer classic patterns," he says. "Particularly colourful fabrics go to Japan." One Japanese customer even ordered a pink-checkered pattern, he laughs.

Mackay doesn't have to say that he wouldn't go out on the street in a pink tweed suit. Nor does he have to. He only weaves.

FROM *SÜDDEUTSCHE ZEITUNG* (14/15 NOVEMBER 2020) © SÜDDEUTSCHE ZEITUNG



The Secret Of Grandparenting

BY *Richard Glover*

When a grandchild comes along, especially for the first time, it's important to have the right help. In our case, it's a lovely young couple who seem absolutely perfect when it comes to bringing up our grandson.

The new baby appears to really like them, which certainly takes away the worry for us. As the grandparent, you can't trust just anybody with such an important job.

Here's the deal: we get the young couple to do most of the difficult work, like feeding the baby, changing nappies and lulling him to sleep.

ILLUSTRATION: SAM ISLAND

He even lives in their house, so that makes things a lot simpler.

We arrive for the good times, such as when the grandson – who looks very handsome – is available to lie in our arms, arching his tiny back and glancing up at the world as if to comprehend its wonder, all while gesturing towards us with his starfish hands.

Why, you may ask, would a young couple be willing to do all the hard work, while the grandparents enjoy the good times?

It's a fair question. When we arrive, the young couple has usually been up all night, dark circles under their eyes, a shuffling quality to their gait.

PARENTS HANDLE THE TRICKY THINGS; GRANDPARENTS GET TO HAVE THE FUN

The grandchild, though, is full of beans. We, the grandparents, take turns rocking him, making eyes at him and telling him he is the most gorgeous child in the world. He wriggles in our arms.

An hour or two later, just when things are about to turn fractious, we hand him back to the young couple and disappear down the front steps. “See you in a few days,” we'll say. “We're just going to stay with some friends by the seaside. We're expecting to have a ball.”

Why does the young couple do it? No other occupation is like this: one party dealing with the tricky things, while someone else waltzes in for the fun. Could these differing work conditions really be considered equitable?

And yet the young couple seems happy enough. The grandchild looks like them both, having Mum's green eyes and Dad's quirky chin. That's a stroke of serendipity that may have helped win them over to the task. The child also shows signs of his parents' expansive spirits.

But what, in practical terms, does the young couple get in return for their service? Well, firstly, they get access to their own parents' advice. And in such fabulous quantity.

All our advice is 30 years old, so it has really stood the test of time. We tell them exactly how the baby should be lying when in his cot; how he should be fed; and the precise brand of bouncy sling they should purchase for him (it's just like the one we purchased three decades ago).

They respond by telling us all this stuff they heard from the hospital about how the baby would die should they follow our advice.

The result: we've decided to let them do it their way. Does that mean we're easy-going? If, as grandparents, we have a fault, this might be it.

Really, their nutty ideas are endless, especially the way they rush to nurse the child every time he so much as squawks. They constantly indulge him. I hope they realise that, in terms of demarcation, this is our job.

Then there's the issue of housework. Ever since our grandchild came to live with his parents, their household standards have really fallen. There's un-ironed laundry everywhere and the washing line is full of nappies that have yet to be brought in and folded.

The situation is so dire that I wonder whether I should just hop in and help them. After all, no one wants their grandchild growing up in a pigsty. But, actually, I think it's better for me to focus on the child himself, whispering my life wisdom into his tiny ear. Wisdom such as: "Your parents could tidy up."

There's one area, however, in which I have been providing assistance: the food supply. I bring them all the delicious dishes I have perfected over my many years of cooking. All four of them. The lasagne. The lamb curry. The vegetable tart. And the Spanish meatballs. These I supply in such quantities that the young couple have lunch and dinner for weeks ahead, both fresh and frozen.

Three weeks in, the male half of the young couple rings me. I suppose I should mention that he's my son. Sure, it sounds nepotistic, but we decided he and his partner really were best placed to look after our grandchild.

"Dad," he says, sounding a bit stern. "It's been very kind of you to bring all the food, but I think we can now go it alone."

I'm torn between two theories. Is this a sign that the young parents are coping well, a discovery that should leave me delighted? Or is it a sign that my Spanish meatballs may not be up to scratch?

I don't know about that. What I do know is that we've landed on our feet with this particular young couple. When it comes to raising our grandson, I don't think anyone could do it better. R

I WHISPER LIFE WISDOM INTO THE CHILD'S TINY EAR: **"YOUR PARENTS COULD TIDY UP"**

◆ ◆ ◆

A Hive Of Trouble

Professional beekeeper and anti-eviction activist Rorie Woods was accused of using a swarm of bees as a dangerous weapon after she unleashed a hive of the angry insects on Massachusetts police officers trying to serve an eviction notice late last year. REUTERS

QUOTABLE QUOTES

All the beautiful sentiments in the world weigh less than a single lovely action.

JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL,
POET

I RECOMMEND LIMITING ONE'S INVOLVEMENT IN OTHER PEOPLE'S LIVES TO A PLEASANTLY SCANT MINIMUM.

QUENTIN CRISP,
RACONTEUR

I've been extremely lucky in that I've been able to play roles that are not defined by their ethnicity.

JESSICA HENWICK,
ACTRESS

Art is a step from what is obvious and well-known towards what is arcane and concealed.

KHALIL GIBRAN,
PHILOSOPHER AND POET

GRACE, RESPECT, RESERVE AND EMPATHETIC LISTENING ARE QUALITIES SORELY MISSING FROM THE PUBLIC DISCOURSE NOW.

MERYL STREEP, ACTRESS

To improve is to change; to be perfect is to change often.

WINSTON CHURCHILL,
STATESMAN

PHOTOS: GETTY IMAGES

THE *Beauty Queens* OF AL DHAFRA

CULTURE

Welcome to Al Dhafra's camel beauty pageant, where the competition is tough

BY *Kester Schlenz* FROM **STERN**

PHOTOGRAPHED BY **CASPAR WÜNDRICH**

The fictional Hunchback of Notre Dame suffered from his hump. But here, 180 kilometres from the skyscrapers of Abu Dhabi, a really large growth is considered the height of beauty. And if black, bristly hairs sprout from it – even better. Add puffy, drooping lips, and the ideal of beauty is complete. We are talking about camels here – female camels.

In December 2021, German photographer Caspar Wündrich travelled to the United Arab Emirates to attend the Al Dhafra Festival's camel beauty contest in the Gulf. What sounds bizarre to us is a big thing in the Arab world, because it's all about glamour, honour and a lot of money. A total of NZ$22 million is up for grabs as the region's uber-wealthy camel owners send their extremely valuable even-toed ungulates to compete on the camel catwalk.

The action takes place at the edge of the Rub al Khali, the world's largest sand desert, a two-hour drive southwest of Abu Dhabi. All around there is hectic activity; photographers, TV crews, curious spectators and excited competitors.

From inside the gates of this huge festival that celebrates Bedouin culture, a very old-fashioned smell wafts out – an aroma of stables and camels. Entry to the competition is strictly guarded. After waiting a while, Wündrich was finally led through the entrance gate – a wire fence covered with hessian – by attentive guards. There he entered a world where modern-day big money and Arab history combine to form an intriguing mixture of old and new culture.

Homage is paid here to the Bedouin nomadic way of life as it once was – before oil, skyscrapers and football clubs. Camel owners sit on golden chairs in the grandstand or in large, luxurious air-conditioned tents, but the most important thing here is the *camel*.

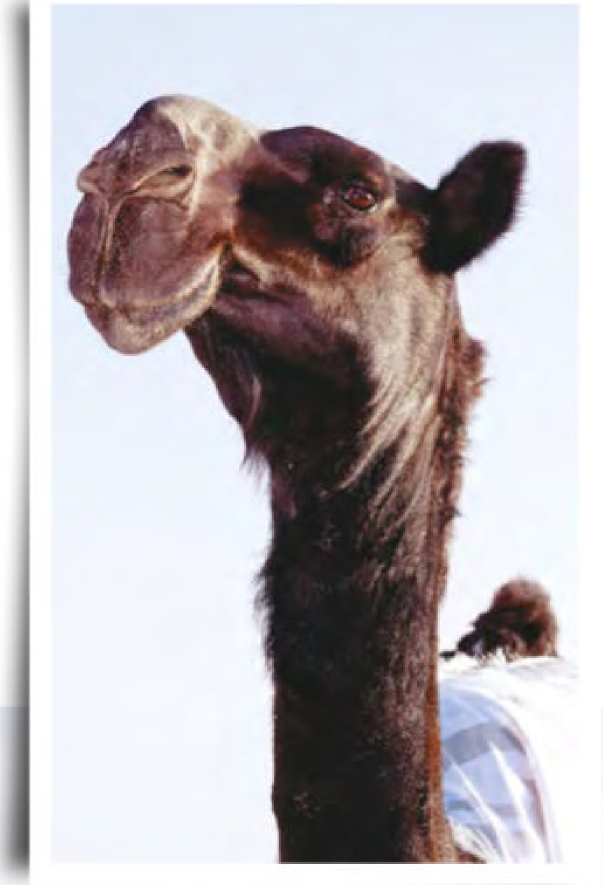
For centuries in the Arab world, a man's wealth was measured by

PHOTOS: 2022 CASPAR WÜNDRICH C/O ECHOECHO

the number of camels he owned. Long-distance trade was practically impossible without the enduring animals. Camels also have an enormous significance in the Arabic context, where the animal is seen as a particularly graceful and patient animal. Camel is even a term of endearment across Asia.

For all these reasons, camels continue to play an important role in the Arab world – but here at the Al Dhafra Festival, the animals are idealised

Below: The multi-day competition is shown live on Emirati TV. Right: A long, graceful camel neck attracts many points



Above: The camels are usually looked after by workers from Sudan. Right: Said Nasr al-Mansuri (without a mask) is happy about a trophy

and pampered, accompanied by their own veterinarians, physiotherapists and even nutritionists. These desert ships lack for nothing. Even less distinctive camels are still worth at least NZ$101,000, while the most beautiful ones are worth millions. Perhaps that's why in Dubai there are already labs specialising in cloning champion camels. Business, it is said, is going well.

But, when the stakes are this high, so too is the need to stay on top of criminal activity. Fraud is a major problem in the camel beauty pageant, with more than 40 animals disqualified in Saudi Arabia after they were found to have had surgery and beautifying botox treatments. That is why the camels are extensively checked before the competition and then isolated and guarded. Sedatives have also been used to relax animal's lips so that they hang gracefully out of their long faces, and even implants in humps detected.

Wündrich spent three days at the festival, talking with camel owners and keepers, jury members and television journalists. The event was broadcast live on Emirati TV and shared live by influencers with millions of followers. The atmosphere in the luxury tents was exuberant and vibrant – and not unlike a private tent at the horse races.

"Yallah, Yallah," echo the voices coming from the seats where the camel owners are sitting, trying to alarm them with these trilling sounds to make the animals tense their bodies. Camels, we learn, can recognise their masters by the sound of their voices. When they do, they crane their necks, making them look long and graceful, which attracts many points that are awarded throughout the event in different categories.

Light and dark camels are judged separately and in age groups from two to six years. Only female camels compete. Key to their beauty? Thick lips and long legs. For the winners – both animals and owner – fame, honour and social recognition awaits. Even better, the value of any camel that wins a category prize will triple.

The whole event is reminiscent of a Formula 1 race. Different 'stables' compete against each other. The owners celebrate in air-conditioned tents all around the festival site, where they enjoy the spoils of success. Other people do the work, with mostly expert Sudanese groomers caring for the camels.

The region's camel beauty pageants are organised by a league. Whoever finishes with the most points at the end of the season wins a trophy and prize money of around NZ$1.2 million. The Alameri family from Al Ain have won the league for the past three years. Their camel is the reigning cup winner of the United Arab Emirates.

As night falls, the site suddenly empties. The caravan moves – with police protection and blaring music – to the desert camps, where camel milk, figs and Qahwa, spiced Arabic coffee, awaits. Here, in the temporary camps, the wealthy Arabs celebrate their short-term return to the way of life of their ancestors – albeit a more luxurious version.

FROM *STERN* (MARCH 10, 2022);
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PHOTOS: GETTY IMAGES

An unlikely friendship helped my son grapple with divorce, death and...

The Great Unknown

BY *Jowita Bydlowska*

ILLUSTRATION BY
Nikki Ernst

THE APARTMENT MY SON, HUGO, and I moved into after my divorce was nice, but the feeling we had was of holding on to a raft amidst angry waters. We were about a 30-minute drive from Hugo's dad's new home. During the first week he stayed with me there, my eight-year-old son responded to the change in his life by trashing his room before finally letting tears come and allowing me to hug him.

At that time, he also developed a new fear – the fear of death. "I can't sleep. I am thinking about death," he would say when I would catch him with his eyes wide open, in the darkness of his bedroom, his little body tightly surrounded by a cordon of beady-eyed soft toys.

Hugo had always considered himself an atheist, ever since his dad had told him at age four that when we die, we turn to dust. For Hugo, it had been just something to say to make adults laugh and confuse his innocent friends in kindergarten. But now that he was growing up, he was finally grasping the concept of time, and that he was slowly but surely moving towards the big unknown. But I think his fear of death also came about because nothing seemed certain anymore: our little family was no longer a unit, and our lives were divided into split-custody homes. When the nights got too hard for Hugo, we'd fall asleep holding on to each other like two monkeys, and all the unknowns stayed away for one more night.

THAT SAME YEAR, I'd started going to a new addictions group that met twice a week. The group was a safe place where no hard topic was off the table. The best conversations would often happen after our meetings were over, and my favourite person to talk to was Denis, an 80-year-old contrarian and cancer survivor who was considered by everyone else in the group to be a grump. At the end of each meeting we were supposed to stand up and hold hands. I would do this even though it made me uncomfortable – I disliked the forced intimacy of it – but Denis refused. Like a broken link in a circle, he stood there with his hands folded, and it was this little rebellion that made me trust him.

He was one of the first people I confided in about my divorce. His pragmatic response and lack of sentimentality – "It sucks now, but it will get better" – helped me gain perspective on my grief. I knew that Denis himself had gone through many hardships, his recent cancer being one, and yet he had a healthy, no-nonsense attitude that inspired me.

HIS PRAGMATIC RESPONSE HELPED ME GAIN PERSPECTIVE ON MY GRIEF

I was not the only person taken with Denis – my son became an instant fan when they met at a celebration of my one year of sobriety. As we socialised while balancing our slices of cake on flimsy Styrofoam plates, Hugo was polite and charming, but he felt the adults were talking down to him and he was squirming to leave. That is until Denis introduced himself, shaking his hand and asking Hugo what he thought about the "bad cake".

Hugo said he thought the cake was just fine and then pressed Denis about why he didn't hold hands at the end of the group meetings, a detail I'd shared with Hugo.

"I'm not in kindergarten," Denis said, and my son chuckled. Then they talked about being atheists, because Denis remembered from my stories about my precocious kid that this was something they had in common. He told Hugo that he'd never met an eight-year-old atheist before.

"I've never met an 80-year-old atheist before," Hugo deadpanned, and Denis erupted in laughter.

From that time on, the two would ask for updates on each other ("Denis got a new camera to take his bird-watching to the next level"; "Hugo has finished all the *Harry Potter* novels"). Eventually the updates included a devastating one when Denis's cancer came back. I explained to Hugo that his octogenarian buddy was staying at a cancer centre now, and said I was going to visit.

"Is he going to die?" Hugo asked.

"Yes," I told him.

"Soon?"

"Sooner rather than later. Before the summer is over," I answered. I spoke gently but firmly, feeling my throat clenching a bit as I held back tears. Maybe I was harsh, but I had a vague notion of wanting to teach my son about death, of showing him that death, like friendship (or love that ends in a divorce), was part of life. I hoped that, by nurturing a relationship between Denis and Hugo, I could normalise this terrifying thing for my kid, who still worried about his own end.

Hugo's big brown eyes searched my face, his forehead scrunching as he said quietly, "OK. Can I visit him?"

And so he did. On our way to the hospital, Hugo insisted on getting a gift. What do you get a grumpy old man whose only request was, at its most extravagant, a black coffee? A sparkly Beanie Baby dragon, of course, the perfect gift, we joked, for someone with such a sparkly demeanour. Denis was amused and proudly displayed the dragon next to a stuffed elf someone else had given him, also as a joke.

I HOPED I COULD NORMALISE THIS TERRIFYING THING

He let Hugo have his hospital dessert. We went into the common room and played the card game Up and Down the River, with Hugo writing down scores on a sheet of paper. He's always loved numbers and charts and strategy.

"We should play chess," Denis said. "Do you play chess?"

"No, but you can teach me," Hugo allowed.

Denis pretended to be appalled, "If I have to," he said. "What kind of person doesn't play chess?"

I VISITED DENIS every Sunday, always bringing my son with me. We ate doughnuts while they played chess, and we talked about Denis's wild adventures as a farm labourer before he became a lawyer in his 50s, "just to see what that was like". Denis never talked about his cancer, but Hugo had said more than once that maybe they – the doctors – had made a mistake. Denis seemed totally fine!

Except he wasn't. He had long walked with a cane, but that gave way to a walker, which then became a wheelchair. Eventually, Denis was moved to palliative care. Hugo's only comment on the new location, which he called the "dying hospital", was that it didn't seem like anyone was dying in it.

EVENTUALLY WE HAD TO DEAL WITH THE ISSUE OF OUR LAST VISIT

Compared to the previous hospital, which was surrounded by concrete and filled with fragile people in hospital gowns, the palliative care hospital was bright and clean and not depressing at all.

From Denis's windows, we could view a sprawling hill of trees and bushes, grounds dotted with fountains and the wide, murky river.

On our first visit there, Denis pointed out that the prison shared the car park with the facilities – and told Hugo a morbid tale about the last execution there in 1962, of two men by hanging, one of whom maintained his innocence until the end. "It's all haunted up there," he added casually, and laughed when Hugo's eyes went wide.

Once, when feeling particularly sparkly, Denis convinced us to head out for tacos at a cheap food stall a ten-minute walk away – that took us half an hour – and allowed Hugo to push him all the way there.

It wasn't an easy task, as the wheelchair kept getting jammed in the cracks in the footpath. Denis felt proud of being able to treat us, and my kid put on a show of pretending to dine as if in a fine restaurant, bending his plastic utensils in ridiculous ways as he tried to cut up the tacos.

AS DENIS'S HEALTH deteriorated, we'd sometimes only make it to the hospital's rooftop patio, or stick to Denis's room, where they'd play chess.

Throughout all this time, we didn't talk about his illness or the fact that he was going to die soon or what it all meant. But eventually we had to deal with the issue of our last visit – the one when saying goodbye would mean saying goodbye for good.

Hugo and I were scheduled to go to Europe for the rest of the summer, and we came by with some coffee and then went up to the roof, where it was so windy that the chess pieces kept falling over.

Afterwards, Hugo pushed Denis down the long, bright hallways, running at some points and making one wild turn that caused Denis to huff loudly. Hugo kept forgetting that his friend was so fragile, and Denis didn't have the heart to reprimand him.

We dropped him off in his room, and it was the first and the last time we hugged, stiffly – Denis's disdain for physical contact taking a back seat to this sweet, awkward moment.

And then we left. Hugo cried on the way home.

IT WAS THE FIRST AND THE LAST TIME WE HUGGED, STIFFLY

A month later, a relative of Denis's called me while Hugo and I were at the beach, the shimmering sea visible from the windows of our villa as I took the call. He had only days, maybe hours, left, they told us. He could no longer speak. After hanging up, Hugo and I decided we would record a voice mail for him. "What should I say?" Hugo wondered.

"What do you want to say?"

"I don't know. Have a nice trip?" he said and laughed uneasily. After we'd left a clunky message, he added, "But he's an atheist, so he's not even going anywhere."

TWO YEARS LATER, in January of 2020, Hugo's beloved grandmother passed away, and he accepted her death stoically, quipping that he had had training in death with Denis.

I don't know if my son's sleepless nights went away because of those Sunday visits, but we did settle into our new life, despite all the uncertainty. My son no longer obsesses over death, although he has admitted that he's still scared of the big unknown – but who isn't? And I'm not sure if he's an atheist anymore, either.

While replacing his phone this past Christmas, I found a couple of messages sent to his grandmother's number, one reading: "Where are you?"

When I asked him about it, he said, "I was sad and I missed her. It was comforting."

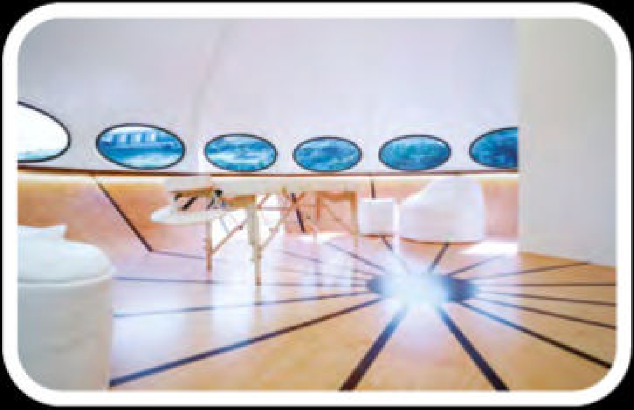
Like all parents, I try to soften blows and dispel myths and monsters, and I know that with Denis, I was trying to make death less scary, give it a human face or, even more straightforwardly, help him make friends with it.

I don't know if Hugo texting his grandmother is a sign of a spell being broken, but I know that he understands now that people live on after they're gone, and recognising that is one way to make peace with the great unknown. R

Built originally as ski lodges in the 1960-70s, spaceship-style Futuro houses are having a resurgence – as holiday homes, spas, wedding venues or simply works of architectural art to be enjoyed. Here's eight examples you can visit...

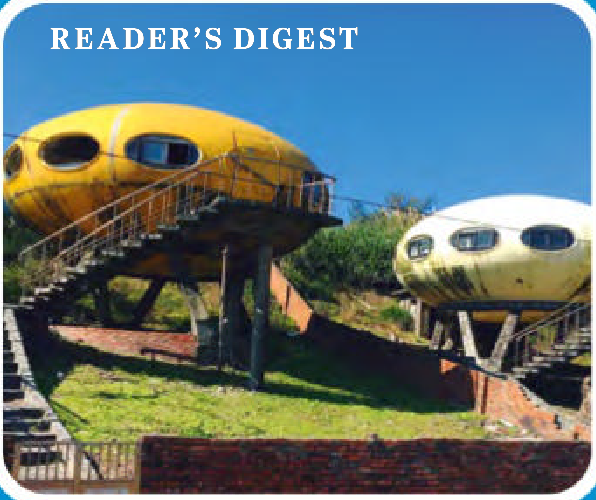
BY *Helen Foster*

BACK TO THE FUTURO



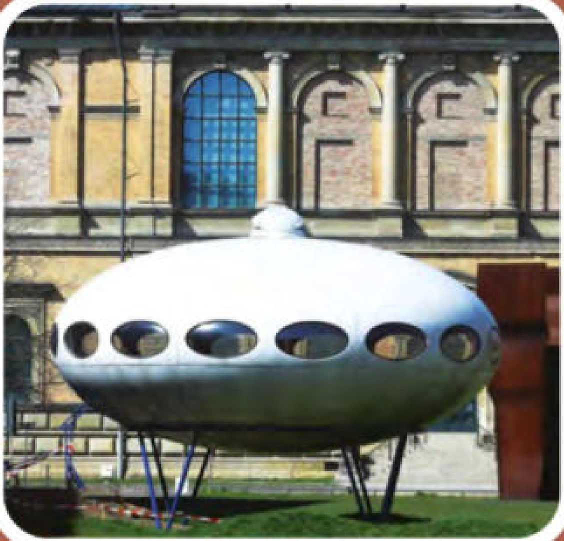
DEEP CREEK, SOUTH AUSTRALIA The owners of Naiko Retreat in Deep Creek didn't buy their Futuro home – they bought the land upon which it sat and it came with it. At one point they were going to give it away to clear the space. Thankfully their son persuaded them otherwise and it's now used for spa treatments for the resort's guests. Before its arrival in Deep Creek, this house was owned by Adelaide businessman Derek Jolly and sat behind Decca's Place restaurant in Melbourne Street, North Adelaide.

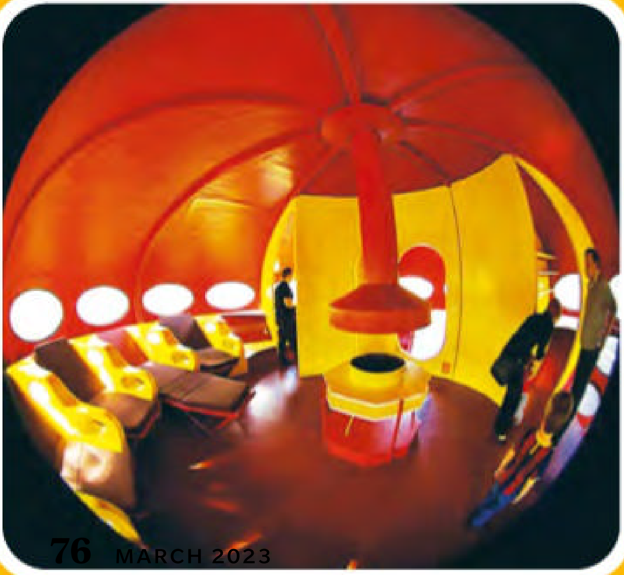
PHOTO: (DEEP CREEK HOME) COURTESY OF NAIKORETREAT



WANLI, TAIWAN The largest cluster of Futuro homes in one place is located just outside Taipei. Eight homes lie totally abandoned, with even belongings like televisions left inside. What caused the residents to up and leave, seemingly overnight, isn't known but stories of a curse on the village are part of local legend. While families are moving into some of the homes, others lie derelict and covered in moss.

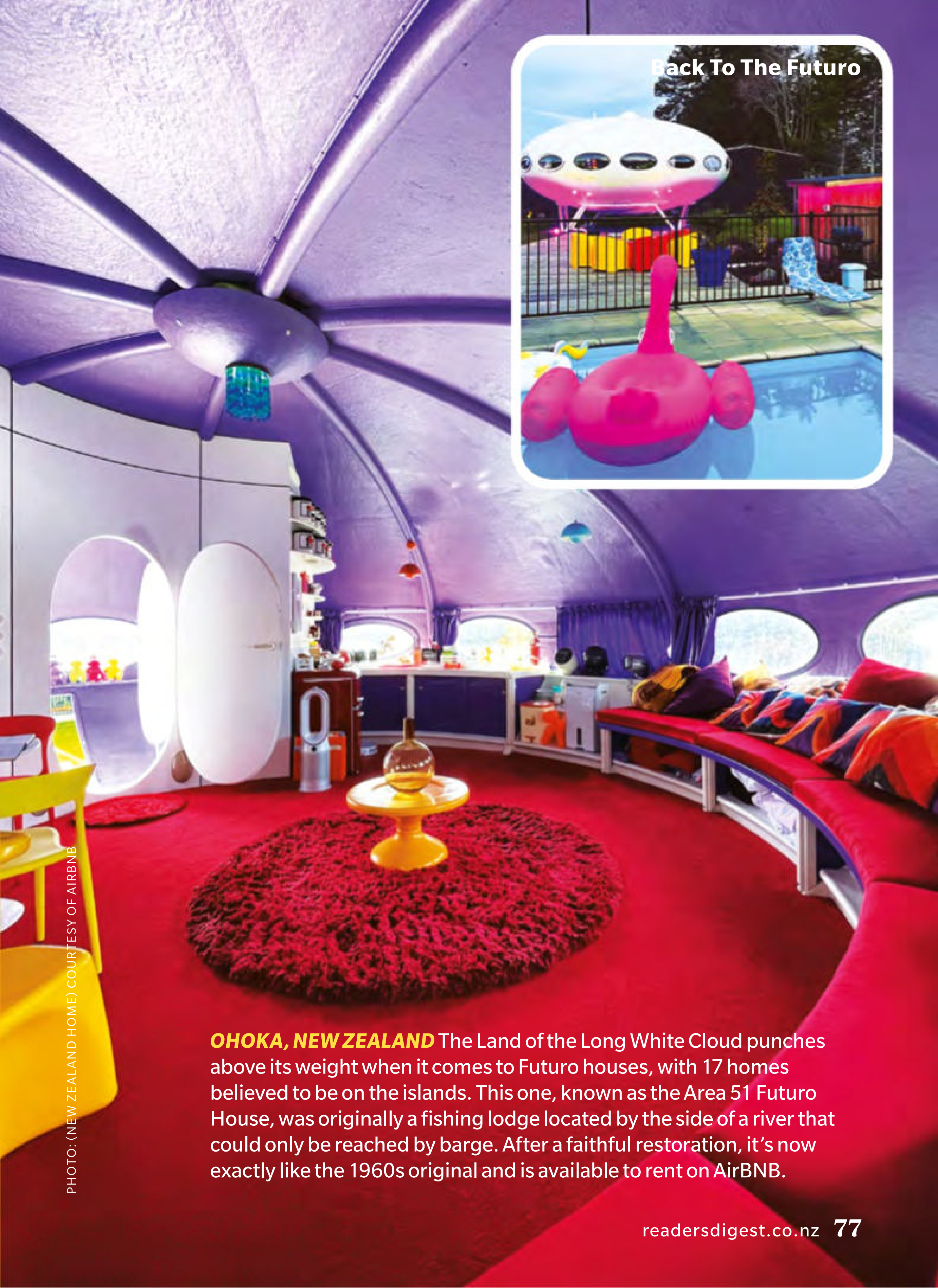
MUNICH, GERMANY Futuro homes are just eight metres in diameter and six metres high with 25 square metres of living space – yet they contained a kitchen, bathroom, lounge and enough space to sleep eight. The 16 double-glazed windows aimed to provide panoramic views from every room. The stairs fold down aeroplane style to allow entry in and out. This house was originally owned by manufacturing company Stiebel Eltron and has been displayed at Munich's Pinakotheken Design Museum since 2017.





ESPOO, FINLAND The interior design varies in Futuro homes, but the Weegee Exhibition Centre in Espoo not only owns the first Futuro ever made, it has faithfully restored it to look as close to the 1968 blueprint as possible. Futuro architect Matti Suurornen lived and worked most of his life in Espoo so it's a fitting destination for the house. It's open from mid-May to mid-September and recently hosted its first wedding.

PHOTOS: (WANLI AND ESPOO HOMES) THEFUTUROHOUSE.COM; (MUNICH HOME GETTY IMAGES

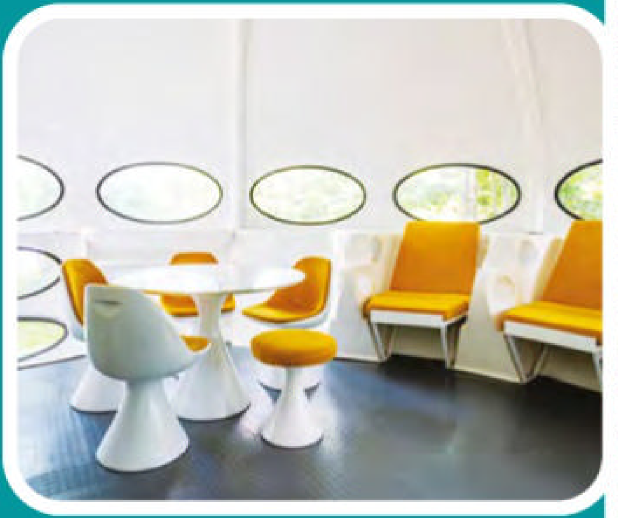


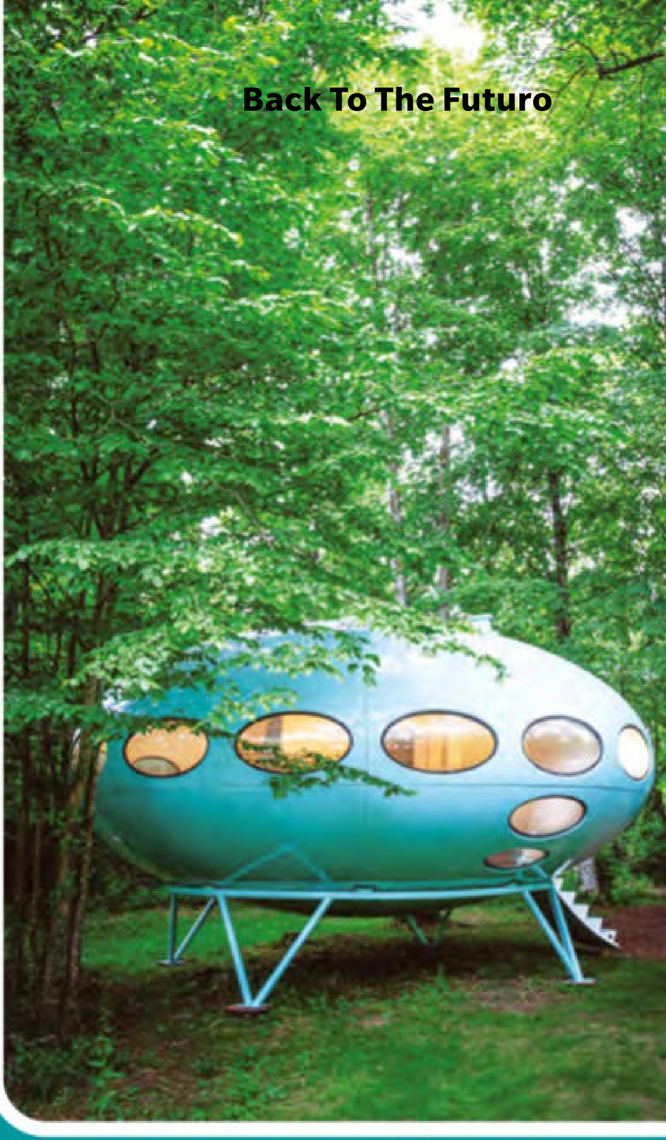
OHOKA, NEW ZEALAND The Land of the Long White Cloud punches above its weight when it comes to Futuro houses, with 17 homes believed to be on the islands. This one, known as the Area 51 Futuro House, was originally a fishing lodge located by the side of a river that could only be reached by barge. After a faithful restoration, it's now exactly like the 1960s original and is available to rent on AirBNB.

PHOTO: (NEW ZEALAND HOME) COURTESY OF AIRBNB

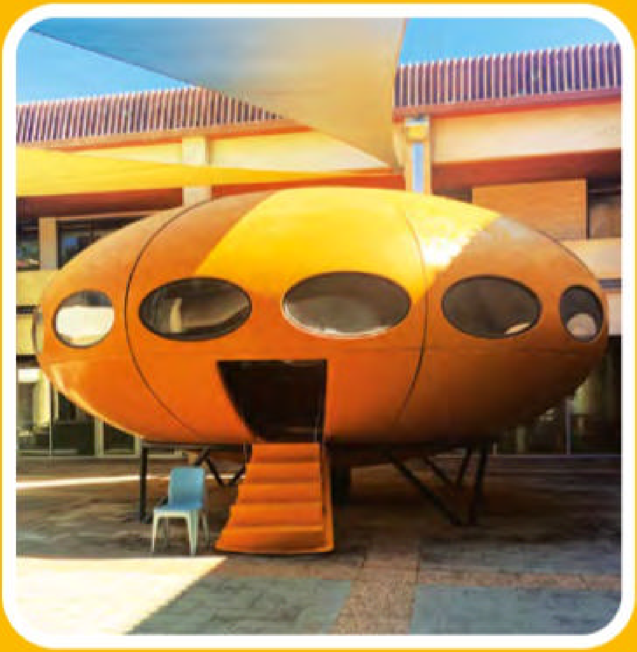
CALIFORNIA, USA One reason that the existing Futuros are so coveted is that only 90 were ever made. A combination of a backlash against the futuristic design – that even saw some councils banning them from being erected in their areas – alongside a sudden surge in the price of oil meant production ceased in the 1970s. It's estimated that only 50-60 are left. This one (above) is in Joshua Tree National Park and rented as an AirBNB.

PHOTO: (CALIFORNIA HOME) COURTESY OF AIRBNB





SOMERSET, ENGLAND Artist Craig Barnes bought this Futuro (above and right) while on holiday in Port Alfred in South Africa, where he grew up seeing 'the spaceship house'. He used his student loan to buy it, had five days to dismantle it and three months to work out where on Earth he was going to put it while it was shipped from South Africa to the UK. After spells in London and France, it's now located in Marston Park Hotel in Somerset, England, where it can be rented by the night.



CANBERRA, AUSTRALIA Designed in 1968 by Finnish architect Matti Suurornen as lightweight, easy-to-assemble holiday homes, one of the selling points of the Futuro was that it could even be erected on the side of a mountain. They came in 16 pieces that slotted together and the round shape was supposed to protect them against wind and snow. This one (left), at the University of Canberra, is now used as a meeting or teaching space, but was originally part of the city's SpaceDome.

PHOTOS: (SOMERSET HOME) COURTESY MARSTONPARK.CO.UK/THE FUTUROHOUSE.COM; (CANBERRA HOME) THEFUTUROHOUSE.COM

OPINION

Fighting Disinformation

From COVID conspiracies to lies about the Ukraine war, traditional fact-checking is no match for the power of the crowd

BY *Eliot Higgins* FROM **THE GUARDIAN**

In recent years, the internet has become the venue for a general collapse in trust. Trolling, fake news and 'doing your own research' have become such a part of public discourse, it's sometimes easy to imagine that the online revolution has only brought us new ways to be confused about the world.

Social media has played a major role in the spread of disinformation. Malicious state enterprises such as the notorious Russian 'troll farms' are part of this, but there's a more powerful mechanism: the way social media brings together people, whether flat earthers or anti-vaxxers, who might not meet like-minded folks in the real world.

Today, if you're convinced our planet isn't round, you don't have to stand on a street corner with a sign shouting at passersby. Instead, you have access to an online community of tens of thousands of individuals producing content that tells you you're right, and builds a web of pseudo-knowledge you can draw from if you feel your beliefs are being challenged.

The same kinds of 'counterfactual communities' arise around any topic that attracts enough general interest. I've witnessed this myself over the past decade while looking into war

ILLUSTRATION: ELIA BARBIERI

crimes in Syria, COVID-19 disinformation, and now the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Why do counterfactual communities form? A key factor is distrust in mainstream authority. For some, this is partly a reaction to the UK and US government's fabrications in the build-up to the 2003 invasion of Iraq. Sometimes, it stems from a sense of injustice around the Israel-Palestine conflict. These are of course legitimate positions, and are not by themselves indicative of a tendency to believe in conspiracies. But a pervasive sense of distrust can make you more vulnerable to slipping down the rabbit hole.

One way of looking at this is that government deception or hypocrisy has caused a form of moral injury. As with the proverb 'once bitten, twice shy', that injury can result in a kneejerk rejection of anyone perceived as being on the side of the establishment.

This creates a problem for traditional approaches to combatting disinformation, such as top-down fact checking, which might be provided by a mainstream media outlet or other organisations. More often than not, this will be dismissed with: "They would say that, wouldn't they?" Fact-checking outfits may do good work, but they are missing the power of the crowd. Because, as well as counterfactual communities, we've also seen what could be called truth-seeking communities emerge around specific issues.

These are internet users who want to inform themselves while guarding against manipulation by others or being misled by their own preconceptions. Once established, they will not only share fact checks in a way that lends them credibility, but often conduct the fact checking themselves.

SOCIAL MEDIA USERS REALISED WITHIN SECONDS THAT THE IMAGES WERE FROM A COMPUTER GAME

What's important about these communities is that they react quickly to information being put out by various actors, including states. In 2017 the Russian Ministry of Defence published images on social media that it claimed showed evidence of US forces assisting the Islamic State in the Middle East. Huge, if true – except it was instantly debunked when social media users realised within seconds that the Russian Ministry of Defence had used screenshots from a computer game.

I would go as far as to say that internet users who are heavily engaged with particular topics are our strongest defence against disinformation. At Bellingcat, a collective of researchers, investigators and citizen journalists I founded in 2014, we've seen this play out in real time during

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the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Our investigation of the downing of Malaysia Airlines flight MH17 over eastern Ukraine in July 2014 helped create a community focused on the conflict there and uses open-source techniques to examine, verify and debunk information.

In the weeks before the invasion, we gathered videos and photos of Russian troop movements that forewarned of the planned attack, and we debunked disinformation spread by separatists – including images of a supposed IED attack, posed with bodies that, as we discovered, had been autopsied before they even arrived at the scene.

After the invasion started, many of the same people collected and geolocated images, including those of potential war crimes, that Bellingcat and its partners have been verifying and archiving for possible use in future accountability processes.

But how do you grow and nurture what are essentially decentralised, self-organised, ad hoc groups like this? Bellingcat's approach has been to engage with them, creating links from their useful social media posts to our publications (all thoroughly fact checked by our team), and crediting them for their efforts. We also create guides and case studies so that anyone inspired to give it a go has the opportunity to learn how to do it.

But there's more to do than simply waiting for crowds of investigators to emerge and hoping they're interested in the same things we are. The answer lies in creating a society that's not only resilient against disinformation, but has the tools to contribute to efforts towards transparency and accountability.

For example, the UK digital media literacy charity The Student View has been going into schools and showing 16-18 year olds how to use investigation techniques to look into issues affecting them. In one case, students in Bradford used freedom-of-information requests to uncover the unusually large number of high-speed police chases in their areas.

Teaching young people how to engage positively with issues they face and then expanding this work into online investigation is not only empowering, it gives them skills they can use throughout their lives.

This is not about turning every 16-18 year old into a journalist, police officer or human rights investigator, but rather giving them tools they can use to contribute, in however small a way, to fight against disinformation. In their home towns, in conflicts such as Ukraine, and in the wider world, they really can make a difference.

Eliot Higgins is founder of the Netherlands-based Bellingcat investigative journalism network and author of We Are Bellingcat: An Intelligence Agency for the People.

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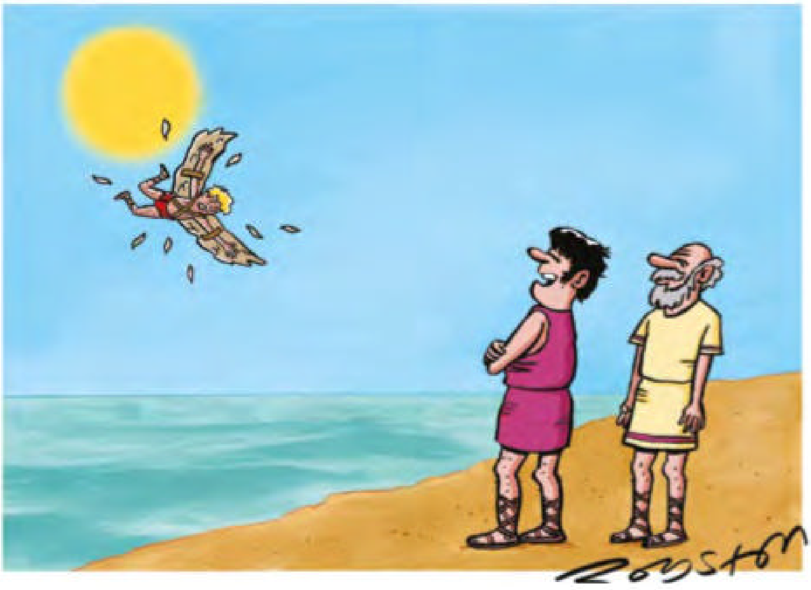


"Can you believe he's trying to get crowdfunding for this?"

Technical Terms About Computers For Farmers

Log on: when you want to make the homestead warmer.
Log off: timberrrrrrrrrrrr.
Mega Hertz: when you are not careful getting the firewood.
Lap top: where the cat sleeps.
Byte: what mosquitoes do.
Modem: what I did to the hay fields.
Keyboard: where the keys hang.
Mouse: little critters that eat the grain in the barn.

funny-jokes.com

No Speed To Argue

Alan is in court and standing in front of the magistrates after trying to argue his way out of his speeding ticket. The magistrates find him guilty, fine him $150 and give him a receipt. Alan, a bit upset by losing the case, sarcastically asks, "What am I supposed to do with this, frame it?"

"No," replies the head magistrate, "You keep it. Two more and you can get a bicycle."

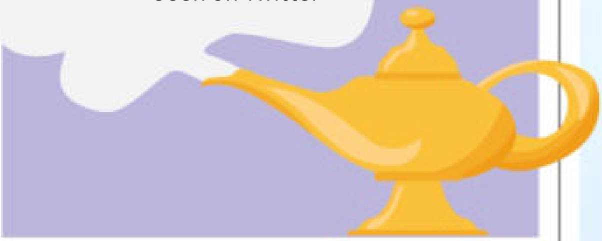
Seen online

CARTOON: ROYSTON; ILLUSTRATIONS: GETTY IMAGES

Make A Wish

I met a magical genie who gave me one wish. I said, *"I wish I could be you."* The genie said, *"Weurd wush but U wull grant ut."*

Seen on Twitter



Circle Of Life

Young people think they know it all, old people think they know it all, and there's a sweet spot right in the middle where we know that nobody really knows anything.

@CROCKETTFORREAL

Timeless

Who decided to call the streaming service Disney+ and not Vault Disney?

Seen on Twitter

Fun In The Sun

People say I don't know how to use sunscreen correctly. Alright, no need to rub it in. **GARY DELANEY, COMEDIAN**

Food For Thought

Never buy too much rocket. It goes off quickly. **IAN POWER, COMEDIAN**

The closest I've ever come to winning the lottery is finding a rogue onion ring in my fries. @prufrockluvsong

REMEMBERING THE IDES OF MARCH

Roman dictator Julius Caesar was famously assassinated on the Ides of March (March 15) by a group of conspirators, including his pals Brutus and Cassius.

Who's in favour of bringing back the use of Roman numerals? *I for one.* Seen on Twitter

The Roman Emperor's wife hates playing hide and seek because wherever she goes Julius Caesar.

ADELE CLIFF, Comedian

What did Caesar say when he ran into his friend at a music lesson? "Etude, Brute?"

Why did Julius Caesar want to quit politics? All that backstabbing was too much for him.

What did the ancient Roman weatherman say when his emperor asked for a forecast? "Hail, Caesar!" jojojokes.com

HEROES

The Movie Gets A NEW ENDING

A producer discovers that the bad guy in his real-life crime drama is innocent

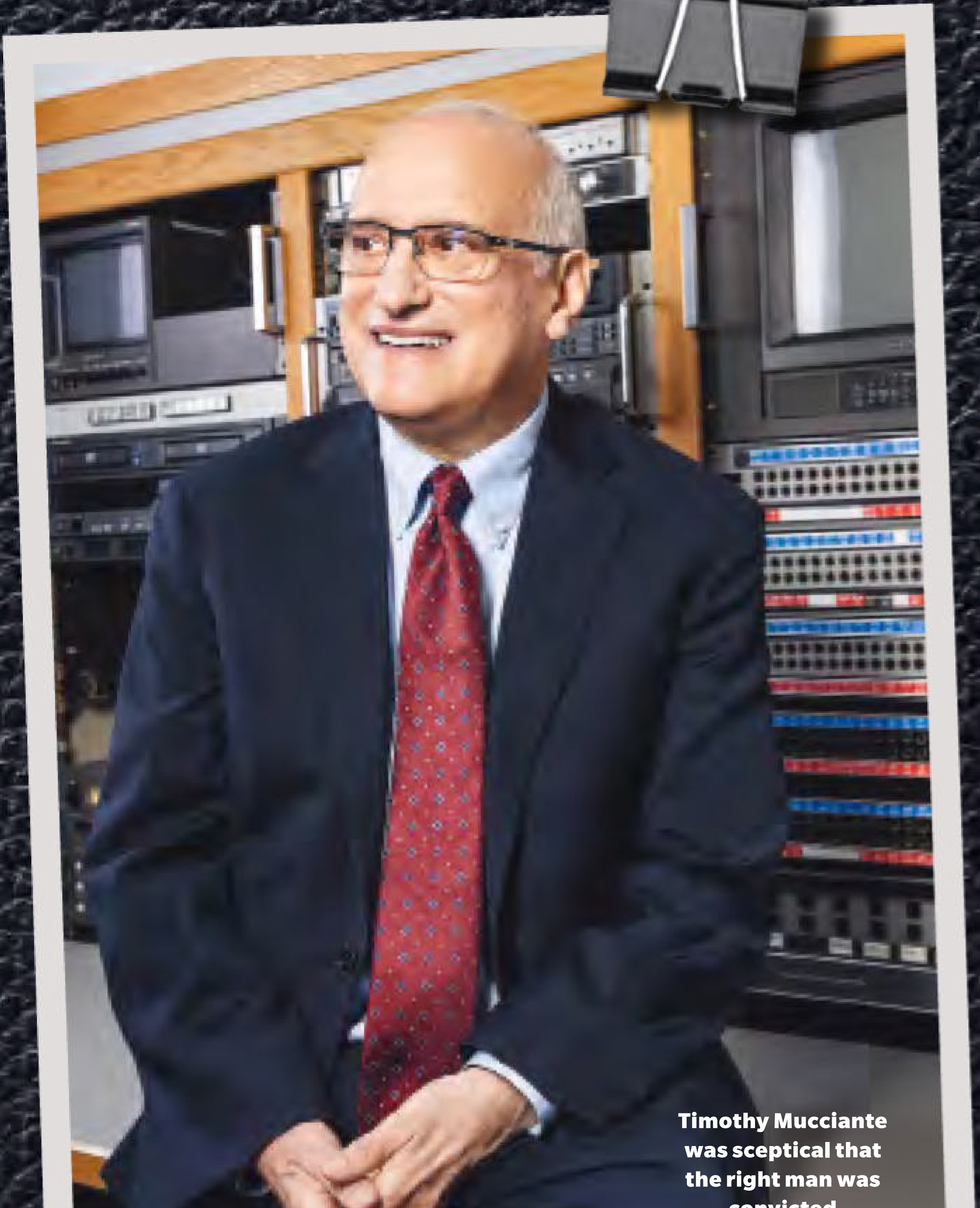
BY *Adrienne Farr*

Timothy Mucciante was an executive producer working on a film called *Lucky* when something in the script struck him as odd. The film was based on the 1999 memoir of the same title by Alice Sebold, author of *The Lovely Bones*. It recounts her sexual assault in 1981 while in her first year at Syracuse University.

It was late at night when Sebold was walking alone back to her dormitory. As she entered a tunnel, a man brandishing a knife grabbed her, threw her to the ground and raped her. The book's title came from a police officer who said a girl had once been murdered in that tunnel. By comparison, the officer told Sebold, she'd been lucky.

In October of that year, Sebold said a man on a Syracuse street called out, "Hey girl, don't I know you from somewhere?" Sebold mistakenly assumed that the man, Anthony Broadwater, then 20, was speaking to her. She became alarmed. Broadwater looked vaguely like her attacker – both were African American and around the same size and age. Sebold called the police and Broadwater was arrested. Although he steadfastly proclaimed his innocence, he was convicted of eight felony counts, including first-degree rape.

PHOTO: MARVIN SHAOUNI



Timothy Mucciante was sceptical that the right man was convicted

Timothy Mucciante was sceptical that the convicted man had a fair trial.

He would spend 16 years in prison. Released in 1998, he had to register as a sex offender.

The crime was brutal. But was Broadwater guilty? After comparing the script to news accounts of the trial, Mucciante wasn't sure. During a police line-up, Sebold initially picked out a different man before eventually changing her mind. Not only that, Sebold later said she and the men stood less than a metre apart. "I knew that is not how line-ups work," says Mucciante, who was no stranger to them. He was in a line-up in the 1980s when he was arrested and ultimately served time for investment fraud. Victims and suspects are never that close. *Was she lying? Confused?* Who knows, but convinced "something was very wrong with this story," Mucciante withdrew the $5 million he put up to finance *Lucky*.

"SOMETHING WAS **VERY WRONG** WITH THIS STORY"

It was not a decision he made lightly. Mucciante, who had been a lawyer and journalist, had just formed his own film company a year earlier. *Lucky* was to be his big break. Using his own money, Mucciante hired a private investigator and contacted two lawyers who found numerous discrepancies in the case: a partial fingerprint on the pocketknife used in the rape could not be linked to Broadwater; distinguishing features like a scar on Broadwater's face and his chipped tooth were never mentioned and did not appear in the police sketch; and Broadwater passed two polygraph tests. And then there was the police crime lab analyst who testified that hair found at the scene had characteristics that were consistent with Broadwater's – but the hair comparison method he used was deemed unreliable in later cases, leading to several defendants being set free.

Convinced they had enough to acquit Broadwater, the team brought their findings before a judge. On November 22, 2021, Anthony Broadwater, then 61, sat in the courtroom, awaiting the judge's ruling. When he heard it, he let out a gasp and wept. He'd been exonerated. His name would no longer be tainted by the words 'sex offender'. Sebold regrets her mistake, saying she struggles with the role she played in sending "an innocent man to jail".

Mucciante was almost as happy as Broadwater. "Watching Anthony get his life back is the biggest benefit," he says. As for his film career, Mucciante is producing a documentary about the case, called *Unlucky*. In it, Broadwater, overcome by all that Mucciante and the others did for him, struggles to find the right words. "This is amazing," he says. "It's just like, you can't fathom it, man." ■

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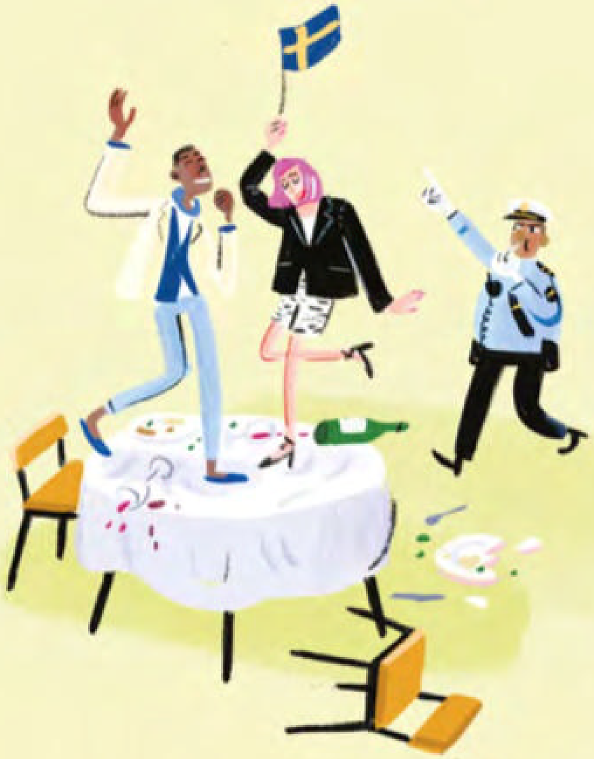
The World's
WEIRDEST LAWS

Written centuries ago or newly passed, here are 30 regulations in force across the globe that range from mildly amusing to downright bizarre

BY *Susannah Hickling* ILLUSTRATIONS BY **STEPHEN COLLINS**



Standing Room Only

It's illegal to spontaneously dance in a bar or restaurant in **Sweden**. Owners must adhere to a bygone law and get a dance licence. The Swedish parliament announced its intention to repeal the law in 2016, yet a restaurant owner in the province of Härjedalen was prosecuted as recently as 2020.

Lights Out

No light must be visible within five kilometres of the king's bedroom in the Palace of Versailles in **France**. This 18th-century law means the Versailles football club doesn't have floodlights and, as a result, can't host all of its home games – including one against Toulouse in January 2022. It had to move the match to its opponent's pitch nearly 700 kilometres away.

Rodent Repellent

Rats aren't allowed to enter the province of Alberta in **Canada**, not even as pets. They're considered a pest that destroys crops and spreads disease, and a rat-control programme has kept them at bay since the 1950s.

Fishing Rights

All beached whales and sturgeons in the **United Kingdom** must be offered to the reigning monarch, according to a decree from 1322. Nevertheless, as recently as 2004, the late Queen Elizabeth II waived her right to a 120-kilogram sturgeon caught by fisherman Robert Davies in Wales.

Wedding Wake-Up Call

Being unconscious at your own wedding is *verboten* in **Germany**. The marriage can be annulled if one of the parties wasn't aware that they were getting hitched.

Weather Warning

In Texas, **USA**, you must make an announcement if you want to mess with the climate. Anyone wishing to engage in cloud seeding to generate rain must publish a notice in a local newspaper once a week for three consecutive weeks.

Creatures Great And Small

In **Belgium**, no one can take your last cow or 12 sheep or goats. Your last pig and 24 chickens can't be removed either. This law is to prevent a bailiff leaving you destitute.

Welcome To Earth

In 1995, the city of Barra do Garças in **Brazil** passed a law setting aside five hectares for a UFO airport – to cater to the 'flying saucers' reportedly spotted in the area. The city has since also sanctioned an annual 'E.T. Day'.

Hikers, Stay Clothed

Naked hiking is banned in **Switzerland**. While being nude in public isn't illegal, the demi canton of Appenzell Inner Rhodes fined one rambling naturist for indecency after he walked past a family with young children who were picnicking.

Citizens then voted in a referendum to put a stop to naked hiking and in 2011 the man lost his appeal against his conviction.

Exasperation Nation

It's a crime to be annoying in the **Philippines**. The offence of 'unjust vexation' – deliberately upsetting another person – is punishable by a prison sentence of up to 30 days or a fine, or both. While it's sensible to outlaw harassment, this law can cover anything that causes irritation. For example, the mayor of Caibiran was convicted of unjust vexation for padlocking a market stall and taking its contents to the police station because the stallholder had not paid her rent.

Berry Good Idea

You may pick someone else's cloudberries in **Norway**, but only if you eat them on site. The fruit, which resemble an orange or yellow blackberry and grow wild, are an expensive delicacy, so in the counties of Troms and Finnmark, and Nordland, if the landowner has signs prohibiting picking, you're allowed to gather them but not take them away to eat.

What's In A Name?

In football player Lionel Messi's hometown of Rosario, in **Argentina**, you aren't allowed to give your child the first name Messi. The director of the Civil Registry in Santa Fe province stepped in after a family in another area did just that. He ruled that it was against the law because Messi is a surname. (Lionel remains a perfectly acceptable name.)

The Hot Seat

In **Pakistan**, having a rider on the back of a motorcycle is banned in some provinces on certain public holidays. But the rule doesn't always apply: exemptions can include women, children, senior citizens, law enforcement personnel, security staff and journalists.

Burglars Have Rights, Too

You must not lock a burglar in the toilet if he breaks into your home in the **Netherlands**. This is considered deprivation of freedom, which is illegal.

Bye Bye, Buccaneer

In the state of Victoria in **Australia**, you can be sentenced to up to ten years in prison for trading or even corresponding with a pirate under a relatively recent 1958 law.

Noise Complaint

Anyone who sets off a cannon or other firearm within 200 metres of a house or road in **Hong Kong** 'to the annoyance of any inhabitant or passer-by' and who then, after being asked to stop, does it again, is liable to a fine of $37.

Beer, Please

All 'peasants' must plant hops in **Finland** unless their land is unsuitable. Contravening this law dating back to 1734 will, in theory, incur a fine in 'thalers' (silver coins that were the currency at the time).

It's In The Water

In **Italy** – Rome, specifically – your lips must not make contact with the spout of a drinking fountain. This was just one of a series of laws introduced by city authorities in 2019 to improve life for residents and tourists.

Money Problems

It's illegal to step on local currency in **Thailand**. Under the country's *lèse-majesté* law, you could face a prison sentence if you disrespect the king. This extends to insulting his image, which appears on all forms of money.

Sober Judgement

Selling alcohol 24 hours before a major election can be prohibited by states in **Mexico**, ostensibly to maintain public order. This 'Dry Law' dating back to the early 20th century also limits the sale of booze on election day itself.

Dirt Road

You're not permitted to wash on a public thoroughfare in **Malaysia**. Under the Minor Offences Act of 1955, you can be fined for cleaning items such as your car, an animal, yourself or another person on the highway.

Condiment Control

Salt, ketchup and mayonnaise are banned from restaurant tables in **Uruguay**. In the capital city of Montevideo, if you want them, you have to ask. The measure is part of a drive to reduce high levels of hypertension.

Keep Your Cash

People born in **Monaco** aren't allowed to play in its casinos, despite being citizens of a principality that is world famous for gambling. The origins of the law go back to the 19th century when the royal family aimed to shore up Monaco's dwindling fortunes by making it a paradise for the world's wealthy. It also wanted to protect its own less-than-affluent populace from further impoverishing itself.

No More Rust!

In Valencia in **Spain**, the local police can confiscate rusty beach umbrellas. They can also take away rusty chairs and hammocks 'to avoid any type of possible contamination'.

Flush After Use

You could be fined up to $1000 in **Singapore** if you don't flush after using a public toilet.

Gluten Free

Using bread to clean wallpaper or floors is prohibited in **Austria**, according to a 1915 law.

Flight Risk

Under the 1934 Indian Aircraft Act, a kite is defined as an aircraft. As a result, you aren't allowed to fly one in **India** without a permit.

Banner Bans

In **Chile**, you can be fined for forgetting to hang the national flag from your home on Independence Day. Hanging it the wrong way will also get you into trouble. The flag must be suspended from a white pole or from the front of the building, and be clean and in good condition.

Live In The Present

It's against the law in **Malta** to pretend to be a diviner, fortune teller or interpreter of dreams and make money from it.

Under the Influence

You can be prosecuted for drunk driving in **Japan** even if you're not drunk and not driving. How so? It's against the law to be a passenger in a car in which the driver is over the limit. R

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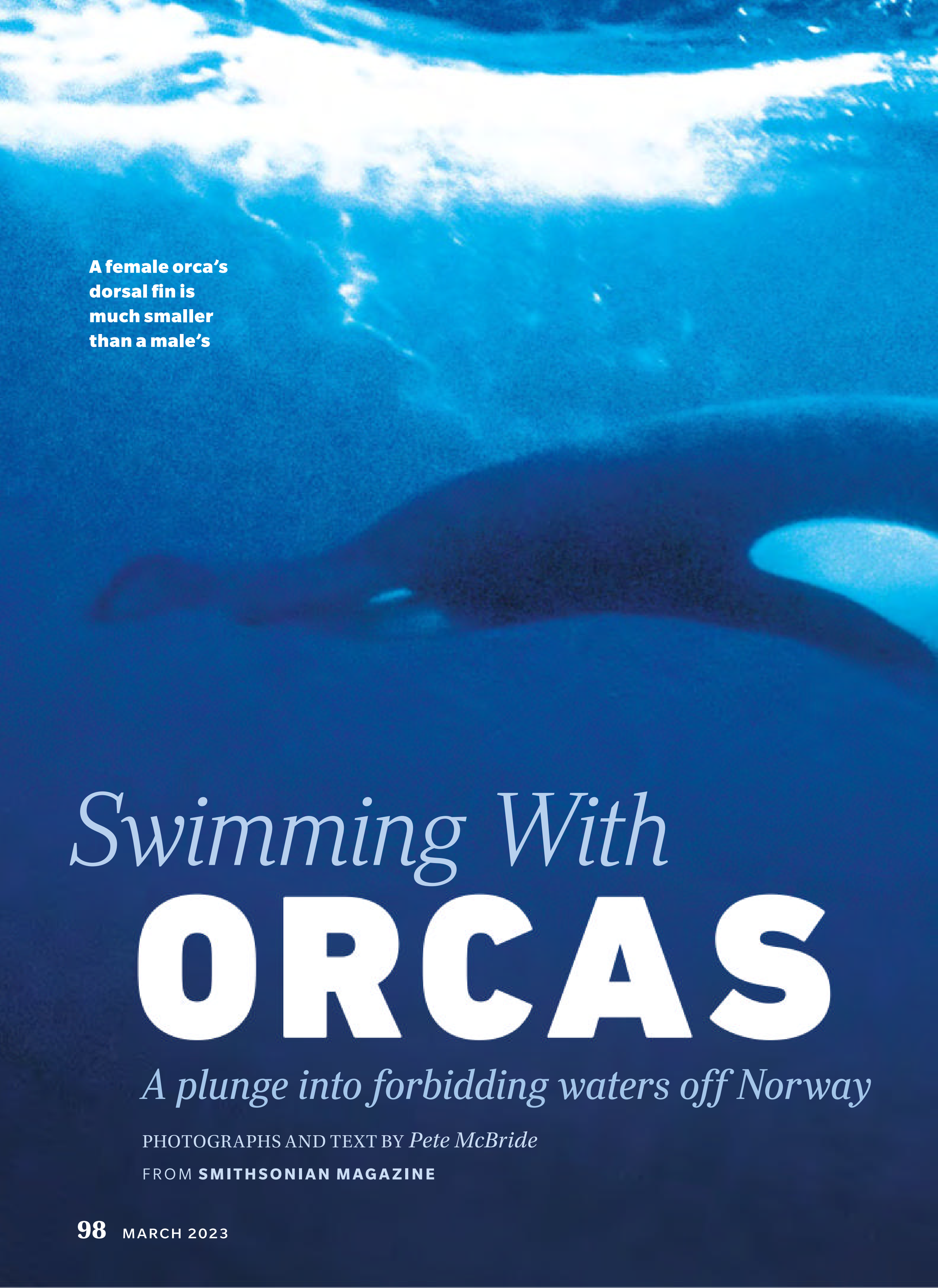
Monkey Business

An annual festival in Thailand celebrates monkeys. After a hiatus due to COVID-19, rows of monkey statues holding trays of sticky rice, fruit and salad were lined up outside the Ancient Three Pagodas in Lopburi province. Throngs of ravenous macaque monkeys then pounced and devoured the food prepared for them by locals to show gratitude for bringing in tourism. HUFFPOST.COM



A female orca's dorsal fin is much smaller than a male's

Swimming With ORCAS

A plunge into forbidding waters off Norway

PHOTOGRAPHS AND TEXT BY *Pete McBride*

FROM **SMITHSONIAN MAGAZINE**

leads to an extraordinary encounter

The water is cold inside Norway's northernmost fjords. When I slipped in headfirst, wearing a thick wetsuit, the 4°C surface temperature made the water feel dense and biting on my exposed face. Diving down, I crossed a threshold into another world – dark, frigid, seemingly bottomless – and home to giant carnivores that eat fish, seals and porpoises.

If you want to see wild orcas, they can be found in every ocean, from the Arctic to Antarctic. The coast of Canada's British Columbia, Argentina's Valdes Peninsula, and Australia's Bremer Bay are all popular orca-watching spots.

Despite their 'killer whale' nickname, orcas don't prey on humans. But they are the largest dolphins on the planet, with seven main ecotypes that vary in pigmentation pattern, diet and sonar dialect. Members of these groups don't usually mate with one another, though scientists are divided on whether to consider them different species.

Most countries set limits on how close you can get to orcas. That's not the case in Norway, which has no laws against swimming with dolphins and whales (the country's whaling laws are also notoriously lax).

This makes Norway an alluring destination for orca lovers, but it can also lead to danger for both humans and animals. At one point during my visit, I saw three young tourists block a pod of orcas with their sailboat, jump into the water, and try to approach by paddleboard. Their tactics scared the orcas into hiding far below the surface. What's more, the tourists could have ended up stranded out there beyond the fjords, five

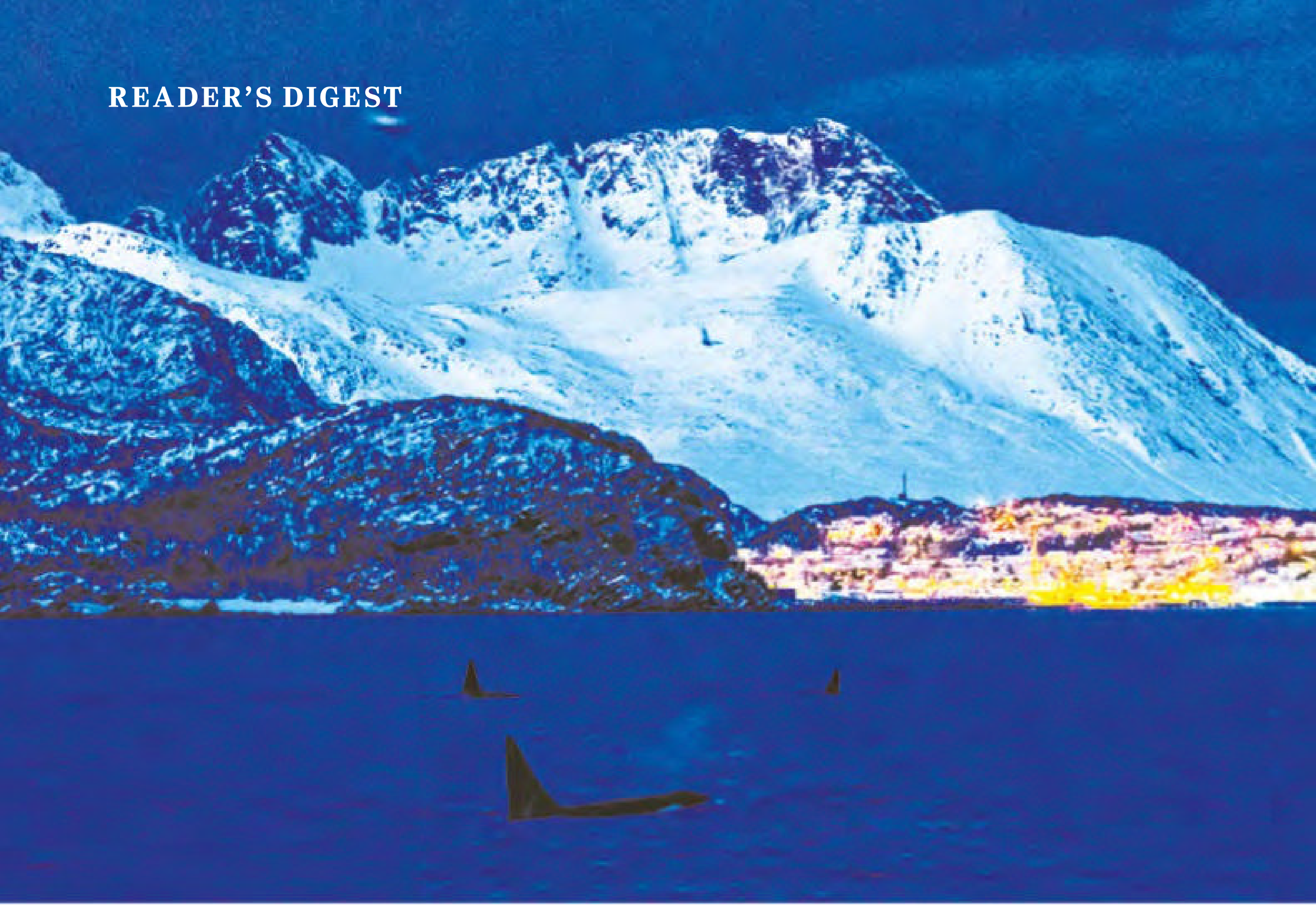
Opposite: Author and photographer Pete McBride prepares to go diving with orcas. Above: A pod of orcas swims near the village of Skjervoy in the far north of Norway

kilometres from the nearest shoreline, left to the mercy of the fierce Arctic weather and currents.

My tour operator, Jacques de Vos, went to great lengths to avoid such situations. De Vos is a South African-born diver who has been studying orcas in this region for the last seven winters and has a reputation for being sensitive to the animals and their habitat. He knows how to locate orcas without disturbing the pods or breaking up families.

The orcas in this area feed on herring, which they corral into clusters called bait balls. It takes a lot of energy for cold-water mammals to orchestrate these feeding sessions – de Vos makes sure his divers don't get in the way. He uses his radio to keep in touch with nearby researchers so he can stay attuned to the animals' behaviours and help locate individual members of the pods.

I WENT TO NORWAY partly because the COVID-19 pandemic presented a unique opportunity to photograph orcas in their element. There were far fewer commercial tours operating, so the animals would be significantly less harassed. More importantly, as shipping and fishing slowed worldwide, researchers were able to identify more whale and dolphin vocalisations.



In the early dawn light, a pod of orcas feeds on herring in the waters near Skjervoy

Before de Vos would let me swim with the orcas, I spent a day on his boat learning about their behaviour. He tested my swimming ability, watching me carefully as I dove and climbed back on board, weighed down with diving gear. I listened to his instructions: "Don't swim aggressively towards the orcas. Move calmly and let them come to you. Don't splash your flippers loudly on the surface or make jerky motions."

Before we slid into the sea, de Vos played me a recording full of clicks, whistles and zipper-like sounds. Amazingly, each orca pod uses its own distinct language of notes and tones. Behind the conversations I heard the moans of humpback whales.

De Vos pays attention to these humpbacks, too. They tend to follow orcas and steal their bait balls.

Humpbacks can be as large as 15 metres long and weigh more than 40 tonnes. They don't attack humans, but once in a while they inadvertently scoop up divers who get too close to their food. This reportedly happened to a lobster diver on the east coast of the US in 2020. Remarkably, the whale spat him out and he survived.

On the recording de Vos played for me, the humpbacks called to each other in low baritones, ascending the musical scale. He explained that low and high notes travel different distances.

A whale will call out to a podmate, and the pitch of the reply may indicate how far away it is. De Vos compares the giant creatures to truck drivers speaking to each other on different radio channels.

I NEVER KNEW HOW POWERFUL an orca's sonar pulse could be until I got into the water and felt one reverberate deep in my chest, like the notes from a bass guitar at a rock concert. The sensation was so weirdly moving I hooted through my snorkel.

When a six-tonne orca swims directly at you and pings you with his echolocation device – trying to identify who and what is swimming in his Arctic hunting waters – you realise that you are in a completely alien world. I swam alongside this eight-metre-long male for a few moments. We looked each other in the eye before he surfaced for a breath. His two-metre dorsal fin broke the water just metres in front of me, then he accelerated back down into the darkness with one swoosh of his fluke. Through my wetsuit hoodie, I faintly heard a click and a high-pitched whistle.

Two female orcas appeared about six metres below me, corralling herring into a bait ball. The pair seemed unbothered as I dove down to get a closer look. They started pushing the herring towards me as if I had arrived to help.

Suddenly, the male re-emerged from the depths. As he glided next to me, his pectoral fin – nearly the size of my entire body – slid under my stomach. We eyed each other again before he rolled left and swept his dorsal fin, the size of a small plane's tail, just over my head.

The strafe felt more playful than territorial, like an orca high-five – a moment of connection with an enormous intelligent being in a place where sound is sight and the noisy natural glory of nature still reigns. R

FROM *SMITHSONIAN MAGAZINE*
(OCTOBER 2021), © 2021 BY PETE MCBRIDE

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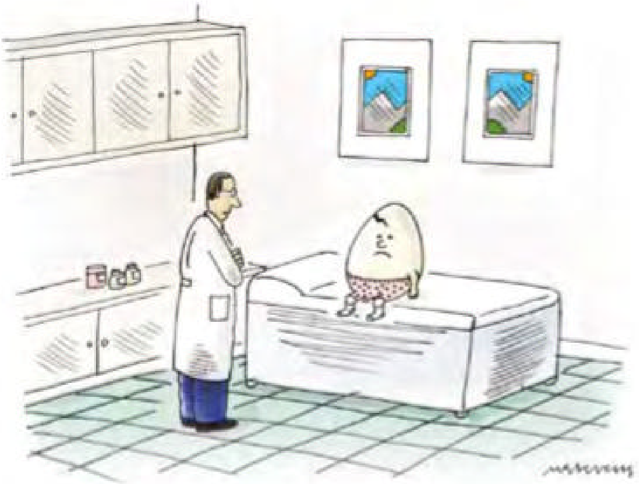
Message In A Bottle

Workers removing the base of a toppled statue in Manitoba, Canada, late last year discovered an 101-year-old message in a bottle decrying Prohibition. The base of a Queen Victoria statue was being removed after it was toppled by protesters in 2021. The message was dated July 30, 1921, when alcoholic beverages were outlawed. UPI.COM

ALL IN A DAY'S WORK

Humour On The Job



"It could be nothing or it could be the beginning of an omelette."

Making His Parents Proud

In the book *You Can't Be Serious*, actor Kal Penn tells the story of how his parents immigrated in search of a better life. "I thanked them for their sacrifices by announcing that I want to be an actor. They replied, 'Oh, honey, it's pronounced doc-tor.'"

Doctor On Call

This real-life actual text exchange proves that some wrong numbers turn out right:

MATT: Hey Dr Park, this is Matt from the vascular lab, I have a patient here with an external iliac occlusion with cold foot pain and numbness that started three days ago. What should I do with her?

HANNAH: Hi, this is Hannah. I think you have the wrong number, but I Googled it and I'm pretty sure you need to put a stent in her left radial artery, best of luck, Matt!

(Later) **MATT:** Hi, Hannah. She ended up actually getting a stent. Took about three hours longer for trained medical professionals to

CARTOON: MICK STEVENS; ILLUSTRATION: GETTY IMAGES

figure out what took you about five minutes, great job.
HANNAH: Are you hiring?

elitedaily.com

Breaking The Code

A couple of days after a software installation, a client called and complained that our product was completely broken. He threatened to cancel payments and drop the project. Fuming, he refused anything but on-site support (not part of the contract) and claimed that the instructions we left him were useless.

He demanded that we make the three-hour trip today. I am shown into the client's office and sit down.
ME: "What is your password?"
CLIENT: "I don't know the password! That's the whole problem!"

His assistant handed him the instructions and pointed to item number one: "On all new installations, the password is the user's last name." After he spelled his name aloud for me, I logged him in. He said thanks and I was shown out.

Clientsfromhell.com

Sound Familiar?

As the parent of a five-year-old boy, I can name all the dinosaurs and none of my colleagues. @pinkcamoto

I feel most offices have three people who do all the work and 15 people who walk around with salads.

@bazecrazeww

CLASSIC RÉSUMÉ BLOOPERS

- Woman who sent her résumé and cover letter without deleting someone else's editing, including such comments as *'I don't think you want to say this about yourself here.'*
- Candidate wrote résumé as a play – Act 1, Act 2, etc.
- 'Skills: Strong Work Ethic, Attention to Detail, Team Player, Self-Motivated, Attention to Detail.'
- A woman had attached a picture of herself in a Minnie Mouse costume.
- 'I am loyal to my employer at all costs. Please feel free to respond to my résumé on my office voicemail.'
- 'I have an excellent track record, although I am not a horse.'

Sources: *The Washington Post*, Careerbuilder.ca, *Fortune* magazine

ART OF LIVING

Find Awe In EVERYDAY LIFE

We associate the emotion with rare experiences. But people in our daily lives can make us feel it, too

BY *Elizabeth Bernstein* FROM **THE WALL STREET JOURNAL**

PHOTO: KLAUS VEDFELT/GETTY IMAGES; ILLUSTRATION: MARIA AMADOR

During the summer of 2021, Beverly Wax had an experience that filled her with awe. It wasn't a sunset, a sweeping mountain vista or the sound of waves gently lapping on a beach that got to her.

It was the sight of her son, Justin, lugging a 36-kilogram portable air conditioner up three flights of stairs to her townhouse. Beverly's central air conditioning had conked out the day before – in the middle of a 32°C heat wave.

Beverly, a writer and administrative assistant for a nonprofit that helps seniors, had mentioned to her son that she was having trouble finding someone to fix it quickly. He'd shown up with the new unit as a surprise.

As she watched him sweat and struggle while hauling the unit up the stairs and installing it in her bedroom, Beverly says she felt a wave of gratitude and appreciation for her son.

"The AC touched me greatly," she says.

WE'RE LIVING through trying times. Almost every day, it seems, we're presented with new evidence of how annoying, inconsiderate or downright awful others can be – the people who let the door slam in your face, or the ones who put their speakerphones on in public. So it's easy to forget that people can be awesome, too.

AWE IS THAT FEELING we get when something is so vast it stops us in our tracks. Often, it challenges or expands our thinking. Research shows that awe experiences decrease stress and anxiety and increase positive emotions and overall satisfaction in life, according to Dr Dacher Keltner, a professor of psychology at the University of California, Berkeley, who studies awe. It can also help our relationships, making us feel more compassionate and less greedy, more supported by and more likely to help others.

Most of us associate awe with something rare and beautiful: nature, music or a spiritual experience. But people can trigger awe, too, and not just public heroes – like first responders – or famous people, such as athletes or actors. Research shows that we can be awed by our nearest and dearest – the people sitting next to us on the couch, chatting on the other end of the phone, gazing back at us over Zoom. Psychologists call this interpersonal awe.

"You don't need to go into orbit, or to a museum or a national park," says Dr David B. Yaden, a research fellow at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine's Center for Psychedelic & Consciousness Research. "It's in your home."

WE CAN BE AWED BY THE PEOPLE GAZING BACK AT US OVER ZOOM

Often, this interpersonal awe is a response to life's big, sweeping changes, such as witnessing a baby's first steps. For Lynn Heady, a retired teacher, it's watching a friend living with ovarian cancer and still relishing life.

Jeffrey Davis, a business consultant, says the awe he felt watching his mother reunite with her estranged mother and take care of her as she struggled with dementia made him think more carefully about his own relationships.

Publisher Rich Melheim says he was blown away when his father, who had Alzheimer's, suddenly remembered his name and gave him a blessing shortly before he died.

But interpersonal awe happens in smaller moments, too. John Bargh, a psychologist and professor, said he was "truly awestruck – the jaw-dropping, mouth-open, semi-stunned effect" – by his then-five-year-old daughter while dining with her in a restaurant a number of years ago. When she heard another child crying, she grabbed the toy she had been given with her meal, walked over to the boy and handed it to him, he says.

Unfortunately, we can't make someone else behave in a way that's awesome. But we can prime ourselves to notice it when they do – and take steps to boost the emotion's positive effects.

Question your assumptions

Do you believe your partner is insensitive or your sibling is selfish? There may be a little truth to that, but it's never the whole tale. "The story you tell yourself gets in the way of catching people at their best," says Marianna Graziosi, a specialist in positive psychology.

To increase your chances of feeling awed by the other person, Graziosi suggests you ask yourself what's going on in his or her life that you don't know about. Can you come up with examples of how that person is helping others or doing something positive? In other words, she says, "become a field scientist, like Jane Goodall."

Name awe when you see it

Blurting out, "Wow, that was awesome!" is a simple way to help you identify and remember a special experience. Savour it in the moment then tell others about it. This will reinforce your positive emotions, says Yaden. And recall it or write about it later. Studies show that awe can be elicited again simply by remembering an awe experience.

Thank the person who awed you

This makes the other person feel good and can give your relationship a boost. And it will help you too: studies show that people who practice gratitude have significantly higher levels of happiness and psychological wellbeing than those who don't.

After Beverly Wax's son delivered and installed the air conditioner, she made sure he knew just how much his actions affected her. "I've learned to be grateful for the simple, daily things," she says. And who knows? When you thank the people in your life for awing you, they just might want to do it again and again. R

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La Baguette

The crunchy ambassador for French baking – the baguette — is being added to the UN's list of intangible cultural heritage as a cherished tradition to be preserved by humanity, after France's culture ministry warned of a decline in traditional bakeries. APNEWS

Pilgrim's Progress

Slow adventures on walking routes with historical and spiritual backstories are the new travel rage

Whether you're searching for spiritual solace or simply wish to leave modern life behind and connect with the great outdoors for a few days, following pilgrimage routes across the world is becoming increasingly popular among tourists and hikers. For thousands of years, travellers have visited specific destinations of religious significance, such as sacred shrines. Pilgrimages have long featured in world religions such as Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism and Shinto.

Today, repurposed pilgrimages following time-worn paths are emerging in many destinations, including Scotland, India, Japan, England and Italy, as tourism authorities court more secular visitors.

In 1985, around 1200 people walked the famous Camino De Santiago trail in northwest Spain. By 2019, before COVID-19 got in the way, it had leapt to almost 350,000.

For modern-day wayfarers, who are interested in visiting famous religious landmarks or simply enjoy walking through beautiful villages, forests and mountains, there is improved accommodation, up-to-date signage and handy map apps. Trails vary from one-day walks to month-long treks.

Here are some of the best pilgrim walking routes.

PHOTO: YOUNG O / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

CAMINO DE SANTIAGO

SPAIN, FRANCE AND PORTUGAL

The 'Way Of St James' is the best-known European pilgrim route, attracting hundreds of thousands of walkers every year. It's actually not just one path but a network of them, spanning a wide region of France, Spain and Portugal.

Some of these paths stretch for hundreds of kilometres across the mountains and hills between the French Pyrenees and Portuguese Peneda Geres, but all lead to the same spot in Spanish Galicia – the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela. This shrine to the apostle St James is a UNESCO World Heritage Site that has attracted visitors for hundreds of years.

The far west of Spain is a green and unspoilt region, and Santiago de Compostela is a spellbinding medieval city. But sometimes the route is so popular there can be a shortage of accommodation along the way, so book ahead. The sheer number of pilgrims finishing the route can lead to a bottleneck of weary walkers queuing to enter the cathedral at the end, too. *santiago-compostela.net*

THE NATIONAL TRUST
PILGRIMS WAY

THE PILGRIM'S WAY

ENGLAND

This drover's path across a ridge of chalk hills may have existed since prehistoric times, but it became spiritually significant after the murder and canonisation of Thomas Becket in 1170. His Canterbury shrine started to draw pilgrims from all over Europe, including Geoffrey Chaucer's colourful bunch in *The Canterbury Tales.*

The most celebrated route winds from St Swithun's Shrine in Winchester Cathedral 240 kilometres across the North Downs to Canterbury. It's a glimpse of classic English countryside, full of wide rural views.

After collecting the medieval 'wayfarer's dole' – a free ration of bread and beer – on leaving Winchester, walkers follow tree-lined paths that pass a long sequence of historic sites, like the Black Prince's holy well and Chilham's Norman castle. *britishpilgrimage.org/portfolio/pilgrims-way-to-canterbury*

PHOTO: SJ IMAGES / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

SHIKOKU HENRO

JAPAN

The smallest of Japan's main islands, Shikoku hosts a variety of natural, culinary and cultural experiences. One of these is the Shikoku Henro, or the pilgrimage to 88 temples dotted around the island. Shikoku is where the revered Buddhist monk Kukai (774-835), posthumously known as Kobo Daishi, was born and trained. The full route covers roughly 1400 kilometres. Traditionally, it would take a month or two to complete on foot, staying overnight in *shukubo* (temple lodgings) along the way, but modern wayfarers use public transport and bikes as well. There are also shorter routes covering fewer temples. While the temples welcome visitors, guests are asked to follow the proper etiquette when they arrive, such as washing their hands and mouth and lighting incense.

Another popular trail in Japan is the 68-kilometre Nakahechi route, which links Buddhist and Shinto shrines and is part of the centuries-old Kumano Kodo pilgrimage trail on Honshu island. *shikoku-tourism.com/en/shikoku-henro/shikoku-henro*

PHOTO: ALAMY

ST CUTHBERT'S WAY

SCOTLAND AND ENGLAND

Walking across the narrow tidal causeway to Lindisfarne Abbey on Holy Island, England, would give anyone spiritual goosebumps. The timeless atmosphere of this early Christian monastic site is a rewarding finale to an epic 100-kilometre walking trail through the Scottish Borders.

The official route is now being promoted by tourism officials keen to recreate the success of the Camino. You'll find all the modern internet marketing and online maps, but don't forget the path commemorates a seventh-century Anglo Saxon monk, bishop, hermit and saint.

St Cuthbert died alone in his remote refuge on the Farne Islands, but his relics were buried at Lindisfarne and repeatedly protected from Viking raids. He became a medieval cult figure, inspiring pilgrims from all over Britain, including King Alfred the Great who claimed to have been inspired by a dream of the saint to unite Britain.

Today St Cuthbert's route starts at a 12th-century abbey at Melrose in Scotland, the town where he grew up. Walkers follow modern signs featuring St Cuthbert's cross over the glorious panoramic viewpoints of the hilly borderlands and along the River Tweed to the Northumberland coast. *stcuthbertsway.info*

PHOTO: ISTOCK

LES CHEMINS DU MONT SAINT MICHEL

FRANCE

Walking across Normandy from Rouen to Mont St Michel can provide a wonderful pastoral walking holiday across the top of rural France. Traditional routes to Le Mont cover 320 kilometres from Rouen or 160 kilometres from Caen.

There is one part of the medieval experience, however, that today’s walkers should avoid. The fairytale island’s religious sanctuary stands alone in a wide bay of mud flats where the tide notoriously comes in at the speed of a galloping horse. A thousand years ago pilgrims didn’t have the benefit of tide tables and trusted in God to protect their walk across kilometres of tidal mud. Sadly, their prayers were not always heard, and many were swept away by tides.

Today, some people still carefully take paths across the bay at low tide, but the safest approach to Le Mont is over the new bridge and causeway. *lescheminsdumontsaintmichel.com*

PHOTOS: ISTOCK

VIA COLONIENSIS

GERMANY AND LUXEMBOURG

Medieval Germany had its own pilgrimage routes and one of the best has been revived for modern walking holidays. The Via Coloniensis runs for 240 kilometres through the gentle wooded hills of western Germany and modern Luxembourg.

The route was considered a preliminary for hardy pilgrims bound for the enormous trek to Santiago de Compostela in Spain. Today’s walkers can start at Cologne’s magnificent Gothic cathedral, the largest in northern Europe, and follow clearly marked paths to finish at Trier’s multi-spired St Peter’s Cathedral. Commissioned by Emperor Constantine in the fourth century, St Peter’s is Germany’s oldest church. *jcjourneys.com/way-of-st-james-germany-via-coloniensis*

BONUS READ

I WAS RUN OVER BY A SEMI-TRAILER – AND SURVIVED

What started as a bicycle ride through the city on a beautiful morning turned ugly when the rider took a wrong turn

BY *Katie McKenna*

FROM THE BOOK **HOW TO GET RUN OVER BY A TRUCK**

THE LAST THING I REMEMBER

BEFORE BEING RUN OVER WAS THE HOLLOW SOUND OF MY FIST BANGING THE SIDE OF THE TRUCK, AND THEN I FELT AS THOUGH I WAS TUMBLING. ALL I COULD THINK WAS, PLEASE LET THIS MAN STOP BEFORE THE SECOND SET OF WHEELS COMES FOR ME.

So, how do you get run over by a semi-trailer? My first recommendation is to ride a bicycle.

I live in Brooklyn, and all the hipsters ride bicycles. I figured if those music lovers could handle riding their bikes in Brooklyn so could I. I mean, hello! I was an all-county track champion in high school.

I actually did, for almost a year. I rode my bike on errands. I rode my bike to work. I rode my bike to my friends' apartments, locking it to stop signs and feeling eco-conscious and thoughtful. In the summer I even took myself on romantic bike rides. Stopping in McCarren Park at twilight made me feel like I was in a foreign film, sitting on a park bench in a black beret and a scarf – when in reality I was sitting on patchy brown grass, wearing sports shorts and running shoes.

When I woke up early on October 2, I won't tell you that there was a hand on my shoulder that told me not to go out that day – because that would be untrue. But there were signs from God, three, in fact: 1. My bike tyres were flat; 2. I almost fell down the stairs trying to get my bike out of the apartment; and – most important – 3. I decided not to wear any underwear that day.

As a child I was told to always wear clean underwear. My mother's reason was always the same: "What if you get into an accident?" This never made any sense to me. I had just got up, and the idea of putting on a beautifully pristine pair of undies made no sense.

It was an unbelievably beautiful day. There was the smell of autumn in the air, the sky was a deep blue, and there was no one on the streets. The morning felt like a secret; it was so dark and quiet, it gave me shivers. The trees on my block were beginning to change from dark green to a golden yellow. Autumn has always been my favourite season, a time of new beginnings, a new jacket – a chance to start over again.

PHOTO (PREVIOUS SPREAD): GETTY IMAGES

I walked my bike one block up and over another to the station. By 6.15, tyres fully inflated, I was riding down Metropolitan Avenue (a major thoroughfare in Brooklyn) without much of a plan. I knew I wanted to ride for 45 minutes and just explore the neighbourhood.

About half an hour into my ride, the sun was starting to rise over the low buildings on Vandervoort Avenue. I decided that watching the sunrise as I rode out the last 15 minutes would be a perfect conclusion to my morning workout. I wanted to take this morning and make it mine. I wanted to see something beautiful and then be able to keep it in my pocket all day. It would be my secret to keep.

Stopping at the lights at the corner of Maspeth and Vandervoort, I looked back at the car behind me, a black Mazda sedan. I waved at the driver and pointed to the right, letting them know which way I was going to turn. The semi-trailer that was next to me didn't have its indicator on, so I assumed the driver was going straight. Just in case he wasn't, I waved in his side mirror anyway. I pointed to myself and then I pointed to the right. I always communicated with truck drivers via their side-view mirrors. Every one of them had a sign that specifically said, IF YOU CAN'T SEE MY MIRRORS, I CAN'T SEE YOU. My assumption was that the opposite was also true: if you can see my mirrors, I can see you. I was wrong.

When the lights turned green, I took the right turn wide and easy, without a thought about the 18-wheel vehicle to my left – because it wasn't turning, and for that matter the Mazda wasn't either. I thought I had tons of room. I didn't.

MY ASSUMPTION WAS THAT THE OPPOSITE WAS ALSO TRUE: IF YOU CAN SEE MY MIRRORS, I CAN SEE YOU. *I WAS WRONG*

The last thing I remember before being run over was the hollow sound of my fist banging the side of the truck, and then I felt as though I was tumbling. I don't know where my bike had gone. I knew I was on the road, and there was this moment when I thought, *Am I in an action movie? This happens in action movies. What would Bruce Willis do? What can I do to stop this?!?*

The answer was nothing. There was nothing I could do.

Before I even realised what was happening, I felt pressure and then heard a cracking sound. The realisation that the cracking was my bones shocked me. I squeezed my eyes shut, and I felt the first four wheels of the truck run over my body. I didn't have time to process the pain. All I could think was, *Please let this man stop before the second set of wheels comes for me.*

"No, no, no, please God no," I shrieked before the second set of wheels rolled over my already crushed middle.

This time I kept my eyes open. I watched this second set of giant wheels run over my body. I heard more cracking and felt the grooves in the tyres on my skin. I heard the mud flaps *thwack* over me. I felt gravel in my back. I was a sparrow that had lingered too long in the road, no different from every slow bird, every irresponsible squirrel, every wayward dog that just wasn't fast enough.

Then there was the sound of a horn – a one-note beep that didn't stop. This was the kind of horn-blowing you hear on the expressway during rush hour, the kind where you know the horn is being punched out of frustration. When I heard that horn, I thought to myself, *Now you beep. You couldn't have beeped before your death machine crushed my body?*

Hearing something meant I was still alive. I was still here and – as long as I stayed awake – I was alive. As long as my eyes were open, I was awake. So I barely blinked.

I lay there waiting for something to change, to get better or worse. I waited for a break in the silence that kept ringing in my ears. I remember looking up as the early morning sky went from that deep blue to a sunlight-pale, pale blue – the clouds looked as if they were whipped out of fairy floss.

I screamed out for someone to call my mother. If she was there, she could fix it. As soon as she was notified, all this could be undone. Because this was not reality. Reality was the fact that I had to get back to my apartment and iron my shirt. Reality was that I had a big day at work, and I was nervous about getting sweaty in my new suit. Reality was not that I was on the precipice of losing my life – that was not what was happening. I refused to close my eyes.

"NO, NO, NO, PLEASE GOD NO," I SHRIEKED BEFORE THE SECOND SET OF WHEELS ROLLED OVER MY ALREADY CRUSHED MIDDLE

AS THE INITIAL SHOCK OF IMPACT began to wear off, my body reacted with crushing pain. It was unlike anything I could have imagined. I was confused by it. I couldn't believe there could be a sensation so horrible and intense or that it would continue to radiate out of my body. This excruciating pain stayed right where it was, doing relay races up and down the length of my body. I didn't know what to do. I didn't know how to stop it. I couldn't shake it off, or massage it, or walk to a place that I thought would somehow give me relief. I had no choice but to just lie there, trying not to drown in it.

I remember a young woman about my age come over and said she would call my mother. She asked me if I knew her phone number. I did. I remembered it as a song that my mother had taught my siblings and me to help us learn all the numbers. This young woman, the one who was calling my mother now, had been in the black Mazda. Her boyfriend had been driving. He was directing traffic around me, around the accident scene. They were saving me.

He put up orange cones, and flares were lit around me. Everything changed. I watched as this woman took responsibility for calling a perfect stranger's mother to tell her that her daughter's body had just been crushed by a semi-trailer. I heard her say that her name was Gisele; she sounded scared. Her voice shook as she told my family's answering machine that I had been in an accident and that whoever got this should call her back as soon as possible.

I knew then that I was broken. My mother wasn't home. She had been called and nothing was better. Plus, Gisele was so frightened – she couldn't even feign calm as she left that message. I was stricken with terror, but I couldn't give in to it. I thought that if I let myself fall into it – fall into the fear, the loneliness, the hurt – I would be lost forever. I had no phone, no ID and, no underwear. If I didn't manage to stay conscious, I would become a whorish Jane Doe who rode a bicycle. I couldn't go out like that.

My one job was to stay awake. I needed to stay awake.

My brain kept whirring as I lay on that Brooklyn street: *What do these people need to know? What do I need to say?*

"I can move my toes and my fingers – if I pass out, tell the paramedics I'm not paralysed." I spoke with the authority of someone who actually knew what they were talking about, not a theatre major who could barely put on a Band-Aid. Thank God for all those TV movies I watched – you know the ones, where someone gets into an accident and then freak out and say, "I can't move my legs, I CAN'T MOVE MY LEGS." Well, I couldn't move my legs either. But I could move my toes, and I knew that counted for something.

"Please, can you hold my hand?" I asked Gisele. "I'm scared." I didn't want to say it. I wanted to be strong

AS THE INITIAL SHOCK OF IMPACT BEGAN TO WEAR OFF, MY BODY REACTED WITH *CRUSHING PAIN*

Katie McKenna with her mother, father, brother Conor and boyfriend Bak

PHOTO: KATIE MCKENNA @KATIEMCKENNA

and funny and to let this just roll off me. I wanted to believe that this wasn't a big deal – that I could put a Band-Aid on this one, all by myself. But after telling another person I was frightened, it became clear to me that I wasn't tough enough to do this on my own. My mother wasn't there and I was surrounded by strangers. So I did what made me feel like I was close to my family: I began to pray.

I asked Gisele, the stranger holding my hand, if she would pray with me. Without knowing if she was Catholic, Protestant, Jewish or Muslim – I began to pray the Hail Mary. I prayed to Mary to not let me die. I really didn't want to die.

My voice usually quivered at the 'hour-of-death' part when I said this prayer out loud – this time it felt as if the words were shaking my entire body. *Was this it? Seriously? Was I going to die, here on this street in Brooklyn, because of a wrong turn on a bike ride?*

The only thing I could control just then was my eyes. They were the only part of my body that wasn't hurting. I kept them open for my mother, for my father, for my sister, for my brothers, for my boyfriend, for my friends – I knew if I closed them I would be giving up on ever seeing those people again, on seeing anything else in my life again. If I closed my eyes, there was the possibility that I would be in darkness forever. So I stared unblinking into the sunlight, fearfully gulping up as much light as I could.

WHEN I OPENED my eyes, everything was white. The afternoon sunlight was blindingly white, my sheets were white, and I was feeling white-hot pain. My whole body felt like the tip of a flame. What was happening was beyond anything I had ever felt before. I had heard people use *white-hot* as a descriptor, and it had never made sense to me until now. Before, when I thought of hot things, the colour that came to mind was red. Now, when I closed my eyes I could see the colour of my agony – and it was white. It was a reminder from my broken body that now everything had been flipped. I could no longer slip into the cool darkness behind my eyelids; even there, only bright, bright white lived.

I discovered tubes sticking out of every one of my orifices and wires extending from my fingers. I felt like a plastic octopus. The machines all around me, which these tubes were no doubt attached to, wouldn't stop beeping. Was the stuff running in and out of the tubes causing the machines to beep? If that was the case, then I would like for the tubes to tell the machines to tell the nurses I was thirsty. Exhausted from this thought exercise, I closed my eyes and fell back into the whiteness.

When I opened my eyes again, my mum and dad, my brother Conor, and my boyfriend, Bak, were standing at the end of my hospital bed. My father's face was bright red, and he had his fist up to his mouth. His shoulders shook as he sobbed. Tears slipped down my face as I waved at him and mum, and then I pointed to myself and curled my fingers into the OK sign. I didn't actually feel OK, but I didn't think that a thumbs-down sign was appropriate – they looked worried enough as it was. In reality, having them there did make everything seem a little more OK.

IF I CLOSED MY EYES, THERE WAS THE POSSIBILITY THAT I WOULD BE IN DARKNESS FOREVER

"Hi, baby," my mother said as she pinched my toe. My tears didn't stop, but I felt soothed knowing that I wasn't alone anymore.

As happy as I was to see everyone, my need for water trumped any other thought I had. My thirst was so great that it created a miracle – I finally found a way to use something of what I had learned from 11th-grade chemistry class. I tried to make the chemical combination of H_2O with my fingers, but my hands and arms felt heavy. It was like they had fallen asleep and my attempt to wake them had promoted an attack by thousands of pins and needles. My finger acrobatics left me exhausted, frustrated and still thirsty. Defeated, I closed my eyes.

Four hours later, they removed my breathing tube. I was now able to tell them what I wanted. It was such relief to be able to speak and to know that I wasn't paralysed, but in that moment the best part was knowing they were going to bring me some water. They brought me ice chips instead. I was only allowed a small cup of those lovely little things, but they were magnificent. I know everyone always knocks hospital food, but I have to say that they do ice chips beautifully. That first glorious chip I chomped into had more give than a regular ice cube, and then it broke apart into hundreds of little melting snowflakes in my cardboard mouth. I was elated.

A WEEK AFTER THE ACCIDENT, I was moved out of the ICU. The doctors felt I was stable and ready to be in the regular part of the hospital. I didn't want to leave. The ICU was so bright, and people talked quietly and treated me delicately, as if I was special. But I guess I didn't need their intensive care anymore, so I was kicked out. There wouldn't be people watching over me at all times. No one would be checking in on me, making sure I felt OK, asking if I was thirsty, or pushing the hair away from my face.

On this floor the doctors did rounds about three times a day, with the morning rounds being the longest and most important. In that meeting they would tell me about what was going to happen during the day and do a once-over of all my medical stuff. The rounds lasted about five minutes or so and, in that time, they threw as much information at me as possible.

One morning a group of three doctors came in looking more serious than usual. There was a lot to brief me on – first and foremost that was the day we were covering pain management. The phrase pain management always made me laugh a little. It sounded as though it was a department in the company of my body: "And on your left is where Katie manages her pain, sets up schedules, hires and fires, and sets standards and goals for her pain."

If there really was a pain management department, I was a poor manager. My pain was all over the place. No one showed up on time, no one

FOUR HOURS LATER, THEY REMOVED MY BREATHING TUBE. I WAS NOW ABLE TO TELL THEM *WHAT I WANTED* followed the dress code, and not one person filled out their tax form correctly. It was a mad show.

Every morning they checked in to see how good a manager I was by asking me my pain level, and every morning, I told them it was a ten. Every time. It was always ten – that is, unless I felt like dropping an 11 on them. Those were usually the really slow mornings.

"Katie, do you feel like your pain comes in waves?" one of the doctors asked that morning.

"Yeah, it gets worse sometimes. Like when I move, or breathe too hard, or do anything with my body. But, if I am completely still and barely breathe, it is a steady pain." I was really good at explaining how I felt to doctors – when I breathe, it hurts. When I don't, I feel much better. According to my synopsis, all I had to do was barely breathe, and I'd be just fine.

I WAS REALLY GOOD AT EXPLAINING HOW I FELT TO DOCTORS *– WHEN I BREATHE, IT HURTS*

"OK, so what we think will be best for your pain management would be if you got a morphine drip that would be attached to a pump, so you can use more medicine when you're in a lot of pain and less when the pain is not as intense."

The idea of a morphine pump made sense to me; this way I could get the meds I needed, when I needed them. I could try to manage what was happening to me better. No one understood my pain like I did, so having this pump as a weapon in my managerial arsenal seemed like a good idea. The doctors left me feeling confident that this would be the answer to my problems.

Later that day the nurses brought in this huge machine, offering startling little instruction. They inserted the IV in the vein on the inside of my elbow and attached it to the pump. This machine would allow morphine to be pumped directly into my veins every six minutes. They were giving me the maximum amount of morphine my body could take without overdosing. If I got any more, I could unintentionally kill myself like an 1980s punk rocker. I figured I'd be floating on a cloud of feeling better.

I was mistaken.

The nurses took off the fentanyl pain patch that had been excreting medicine into my bloodstream slowly, carefully, and without me having to work for it. They put the clicker that was attached to the pump into my hand. It was cylindrical and had a button at the top that fitted my thumb perfectly. Left with this huge machine, and the instruction to press the button when I felt pain, I assumed my pain would somehow oblige by making an appearance every six minutes or so.

My body knew the patch had been removed about a half hour after the doctors and the nurses left. The lightning bolts were brighter, stronger, more frightening than anything I had felt thus far. I simply couldn't comprehend that my body could feel this bad without me actually dying. In my first act as official pain manager, I forcefully pressed the button down with my thumb until I heard the click of the pump. A second later there was a rush of cold that spread down my left forearm into my fingers and all over my body, dulling the pain.

Relief and release: this pump was a manager's dream. The pain was still there, but it felt controlled. It felt like it could be handled. It felt amazing.

But then five minutes after pressing the pump, something changed. The morphine and its numbing fingers wore off, and when I pushed the button again, there was no click, no rush of cold, no relief. The pain was still very much there, and it was angry. I kept pushing down the button with my thumb over and over again, waiting, hoping enough time had passed. It has to have been one minute already. Sixty little seconds. They must have passed. THIS IS THE LONGEST 60 SECONDS IN HISTORY! When I was about to lose my mind and rip the pump out and beg for the patch back, I heard the click, and then the cold rush, and finally the relief. It became crystal clear to me how people could become addicted to morphine. I felt the craving and the desperation.

Those last 60 seconds became the worst moments of my day. Wanting it to be six minutes, needing for it to be six minutes. I stared up at that clock, feeling the pain invade my body and fearing that it would never go away. I made up excuses for why this wasn't working: maybe the doctors messed up the dosage? Maybe they just didn't realise how tough I am? I know my chart says I can't take more morphine than this and not have my heart explode, but I know I can.

I SIMPLY COULDN'T COMPREHEND THAT MY BODY COULD FEEL THIS BAD *WITHOUT ME ACTUALLY DYING*

I begged for more medication, for a little higher dosage to get through that sixth minute. They told me they were sorry I was having this pain, but they couldn't give me any more morphine because there could be serious complications… like me dying. I knew the truth though: my doctors were a bunch of unfeeling cowards – OK, Katie might die, gotta be careful. At this point I didn't care if I died. I just wanted to stop hurting.

This whole situation was complicated by the fact that I was never very good at maths. All the adding up of minutes confused me. Luckily, I had been pretty decent at my multiplication tables up to the tens, and miracle of miracles, six was within that realm. So, one day I began my pumping at 6am exactly, and from then on I knew at what position the big hand on the clock would need to be at when I could get my medicine again.

I wrote out the numbers on a napkin: six, 12, 18, 24, 30, 36, 42, 48, 54, 60. Those were the good numbers. Every other number was a bad one. I stared at that clock, wishing for multiples of six, worshipping them, dreaming of them ... which, on top of being sad, was a little creepy.

AS TIME WENT ON, THE SPACE BETWEEN THE ELECTRIC SHOCKS OF PAIN LENGTHENED

I would click the button and hope for a glitch. I would pray for the machine to break and give me a little more, just a little more to keep the pain away. When my six minutes were up, I would hear the click that made the pump go, and I would stare at my forearm and watch my veins take in the painkiller. I believed I could see the pain actually being killed, everything easing, my muscles and bones healing, all that was wrong becoming right again, at least for the next five minutes.

As time went on, the space between the electric shocks of pain lengthened. And as I became a better pain manager, I tried to stretch out the periods of time between pumps. It was a game I played with myself, trying to stave off pressing the pump. I would try for 12 minutes instead of six, and if I made it, I would feel excessively proud of myself. If I got to 15, I would call a managers' meeting with myself and offer me a raise, an award, the promise of a promotion.

One day I set a goal for myself – a serious I-am-not-messing-around goal. I was going to wait 30 minutes between pumps. The lightning bolts of pain came at around 15 minutes, but I breathed in and out, concentrating on what was happening on *The Golden Girls*. From what I could tell, Rose was dumb, Blanche was slutty, Dorothy was sarcastic and Sophia was just sassy. As diverting as this show can be, I willed the ladies to be dumb, slutty, sarcastic and sassy faster. I wasn't sure I could hold out without pushing the trigger, but time crept by at its own stubborn pace with no interest in how I wanted it to roll.

When the last joke was uttered and the canned applause began, I felt an incredible sense of pride and accomplishment. I had fought it. I had fought the pain! I had fought and won! I felt flushed with my victory. That afternoon, I threw myself a little party in my body's conference room. There was a cake with World's Best Manager written on it in blue frosting. And I don't know much about much, but if something is written in blue frosting, you have a moral obligation to believe it.

So I did.

I HATED THAT I COULDN'T WALK. I hated that I was helpless and listless and had no control of my body; but I hated the idea of leaving my bed way more. I had become well acquainted with the pain I was in when I was in bed. I knew what it looked like. I knew what it felt like. I knew what was hurting and why. In my bed I knew where the remote control was. I knew how far I could tilt my bed before the shock waves of pain would start, but I didn't know anything else. It had taken me weeks to get accustomed to this hurt, and I wasn't sure I could handle a new kind.

The idea of the pain was terrifying, but more than the pain I feared the doctors would be right, and maybe I wouldn't be able to walk again. I kept the hope I would be normal again tucked away in my heart. Maybe I will be able to sit up on my own. Maybe someday I can stand. Maybe someday I will be able to walk. That 'maybe' was what I clung to. With physical therapy there was no maybe – it was either sink or swim. I wanted to crawl under the cardboard sheets and never come out again. I wanted to live in the hope, let it surround me, untested. If I had my way, I would never have to try; it would just happen. I would wake up one day and I would be able to walk, and everything would be normal again. I would be just like Pollyanna.

It turned out there was no need for me to be as scared of my first physical therapy session as I had been. My therapist's name was Lou, and in my opinion he had no concept of the gravity of this situation. This was a big deal for me. Not just a big deal, a HUGE deal. If I did this physical therapy business correctly, it would bring me to another level of my recovery. If I didn't, I would sink into a deep, dark abyss that I wasn't sure I would be able to climb out of.

I FELT AN INCREDIBLE SENSE OF PRIDE AND ACCOMPLISHMENT. I HAD FOUGHT IT. *I HAD FOUGHT THE PAIN!*

The thing that made it super clear to me that he didn't 'get' what a big deal this was for me was that he was whistling. *Whistling?* This is not a happy occasion, friend. This is not the bridge in a country song. Are you not aware of how desperate my situation is? Don't you feel sorry for me? Aren't you worried I won't be able to do this? Get with the programme: Katie + Trying to Sit + Right Now = Potential Heartbreak.

Both my parents were in the hospital room with me at the time, covered head to toe in protective garments because the staph infection I'd contracted wasn't completely healed yet. Everything around me was yellow – all their protective gear, the head caps, the apron-gown things. The walls and the lights in the room were all different shades of yellow. It was like being inside a box of Lemonheads.

They were expectant, they were nervous, they were hopeful. I hadn't told them I was scared. I was so sick of telling them I was scared or incapable or sad – I had decided this time I would keep it to myself. I hoped somehow I would be able to pull myself up by my own bootstraps, even though I wasn't wearing boots at this exact moment, and just get it done. If the whole bootstrap thing didn't work, I had a plan B that included chickening out and then crying like a huge baby.

"OK, Katie, you are going to sit up on your own now," Lou said to me breezily. He started to tilt the bed slowly upwards, the mechanical hum lifting me closer and closer to change. With each centimetre towards sitting upright I became more and more aware of my rapidly beating heart and my sweating palms.

Lou was a man of action. He took his huge left hand and put it behind my shoulder blade, and then looped his right hand underneath my knees. His face was about 30 centimetres away from mine when he said, "Now we are going to sit you up." More out of habit than pain, tears sprang to my eyes as I moved.

As I leaned forward, I felt a wisp of cold air on my back, and I realised that my gown was completely open at the back and that everyone in the room was going to see my bottom. Before I could move my arm to at least attempt to close my gown, Lou had rotated my fragile body 90 degrees to the right. I was sitting up on the side of the bed with my feet dangling off the edge.

The room was different. I could see two corners of the ceiling at once. I was so excited. It was a new world! Then I started to feel as though I was falling to the right.

"I'm falling, I'm falling," I screamed. I had only tilted about five centimetres, but my equilibrium was off after a month horizontal. I had no sense of myself or my place in the world. My body couldn't process what was happening. After Lou steadied me, I waved at my parents. "Hi, I'm sitting up."

NOW THAT I HAD BEEN SUCCESSFUL in step one, there was no going back. If I had failed, I would have been allowed to temper-tantrum my way out of this day of physiotherapy.

But I hadn't failed; I had succeeded.

I listened carefully to Lou's instructions. I took hold of the top of the walker with my bony hands. They looked so small and fragile on the grey plastic handles. The last time I had gripped something metal this tightly was my first time on the monkey bars when I was five. My knuckles were just as white then as they were now.

I gripped the walker in my hands and straightened my arms. I willed my forearms to lift my body, and with Lou's help, I touched the ground with my feet, which felt like plaster of Paris. It was as though my feet would sink into it, and then the floor would mould around them.

Lou circled around, spotting me as I lowered myself into a real big-girl chair. Its back was still, and it was totally uncomfortable. I wondered how I had ever sat in something that didn't recline.

The blood started to return to my legs and it felt like they were waking up after I had crossed them for too long. I loved it. I loved the feeling of ANYTHING in my legs. They felt like they were a part of me again. They weren't just lifeless rag dolls attached to my torso. They had worth; they had feeling.

In that instant I stopped being so frightened of my future. Living a semi-normal life became something I could wrap my arms around, something I was actually capable of achieving. I had willed myself to sit up, to stand and then to sit again. I did that. No more waiting and hoping for wellness or happiness or mobility. I had been able to go and get it on my own. I wanted it, and I made it happen.

Katie's book *How To Get Run Over By A Truck* details her long road to recovery

Katie McKenna is a writer, life coach and speaker living in Vermont, USA. Inkshares is an award-winning publisher and film-and-TV production company based in California.

EXCERPTED FROM THE BOOK *HOW TO GET RUN OVER BY A TRUCK*, © INKSHARES, 2016. AVAILABLE ON AMAZON. REPRINTED BY PERMISSION OF THE PUBLISHER.

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THE GENIUS SECTION

Sharpen Your Mind

When A SECRET *Is Bad For Your Health*

BY *Leah Rumack*

Thirty years ago, Allison McColeman hid a big secret from her family: a husband. McColeman, now a 55-year-old mother, feared the marriage would cause too much friction with her parents. Her stepfather didn't like her partner, and the lovebirds had been dating for less than a year, which she knew would worry her mother. Plus, deep down she knew the marriage was a bad idea.

"I was embarrassed to tell them what I'd done," she says. So Allison pretended the man who swept her off her feet was simply her boyfriend. Only her closest friends knew the truth: Allison had married the charming Irishman in a small wedding at the Registry Office, in part to sponsor his bid for citizenship. She expected they'd have a 'real' wedding if the relationship worked out.

Instead, the couple split after a year. It took another five years for Allison to come clean to her mother (her stepfather had since died). Though her ex rarely came up in their conversation, Allison couldn't stop thinking about her secret. It was like there was an elephant in the room that only she saw. "I felt like I'd been lying to her all that time," she says about life before she came clean. "Afterwards, I just felt lighter."

ILLUSTRATION: GETTY IMAGES

We all have personal secrets – even if they're not always as juicy as a hidden marriage. While not everybody needs to know everything about you, the benefits of sharing secrets can often be greater than whatever damage you're imagining you will incur from doing so. Here's how to tell someone a big secret.

ASK YOURSELF: IS IT HARMFUL?

The idea that secrets can be a psychic weight is what first intrigued psychologist Michael Slepian, an associate professor at Columbia University and author of *The Secret Life of Secrets*. His research shows that 97 per cent of people have a secret, and the average person is keeping 13 at any given time. Keeping secrets has been linked with less-satisfying relationships, higher rates of anxiety and depression and a generally diminished sense of wellbeing. Slepian's research revealed 38 categories of common secrets spanning everything from big ones (infidelity, addiction) to relatively minor ones (embarrassing habits, hidden possessions).

ALL TYPES OF SECRETS HAVE THE POTENTIAL TO HARM YOUR MENTAL HEALTH

All types of secrets have the potential to harm your mental health, but that harm doesn't actually come from the stress of concealment. Slepian says the biggest clue to how damaging a secret is to you is how often you involuntarily think about it – like you're picking at a scab. It's more likely that your mind will get stuck thinking about a secret that speaks to your intrinsic sense of self (a hidden marriage) than a more everyday secret (like the fact that I have a stash of chocolate that I hide from my family). "The hard part about having a secret is not that we have to hide it," says Slepian, "but that we have to live with it alone in our thoughts."

DISTINGUISH SHAME FROM GUILT

Chances are good that the secrets that will weigh on you the most are the ones that make you feel bad about yourself. Part of the reason Allison didn't tell her family about her ill-fated nuptials is that some part of her felt that her boyfriend was using her, and she was ashamed she got sucked in. Many of us can relate to shame keeping us quiet. (My husband still likes to remind me about when I 'forgot' to tell him that I was visiting a psychic because I knew he would think it was silly and a waste of money.)

Slepian says that what's more harmful about shame – and what distinguishes it from guilt – is that when you feel ashamed you think I'm a bad person, but when you feel guilt you think I've done a bad thing.

The latter is actually much healthier, he says, and telling your secret can help get you past the shame and to a place where you might reflect on your behaviour.

If you decide you acted wrongly, he adds, you can then figure out how to act differently next time. "You can learn from your mistakes."

CONFIDE…

The most obvious thing you can do to lessen the weight of keeping a secret is to share it with someone, says Slepian. Telling it to another person – be it a friend, a therapist or even an online acquaintance – can reduce the number of times your mind will obsessively go back to it, sort of like opening an emotional pressure valve. But Slepian points out it's not simply the act of confessing that helps get your mind out of the record groove – it's the conversation that follows.

"Confessing something on the internet anonymously can feel really great for about ten seconds," he says. "But having a conversation with someone you trust works because people can bring a unique perspective, emotional support or advice." Even being heard by one person can help you think about your secret differently and move forward.

EVEN BEING HEARD BY ONE PERSON CAN HELP YOU THINK ABOUT YOUR SECRET DIFFERENTLY AND MOVE FORWARD

BUT CONFIDE IN THE RIGHT PERSON

Slepian says that people share 26 per cent of the secrets they're told, which seems like a pretty big gamble to take if you have a secret you really want kept (mostly) under wraps. The key, he says, is to choose someone who has a similar set of morals and values as you. "People are more likely to pass on a secret if they're morally outraged by the behaviour," he says. "So don't confide in someone who's going to be scandalised by your admission."

For example, you may not want to share that you've developed a crush on a colleague (even though you're already in a relationship) with the friend who thinks that even looking at another person is tantamount to cheating. It's probably better to save that particular tidbit for the pal who knows a bit of innocent daydreaming when she sees it and can reassure you that you're not a monster who's destined to break up your family.

Deep down, past all the worry and shame, Allison knew that her mother could handle the secret. "She was surprised, but she wasn't angry," she says. Mostly, she was happy Allison was OK, divorced and had a clean slate. "And I felt much better because I got it off my chest." R

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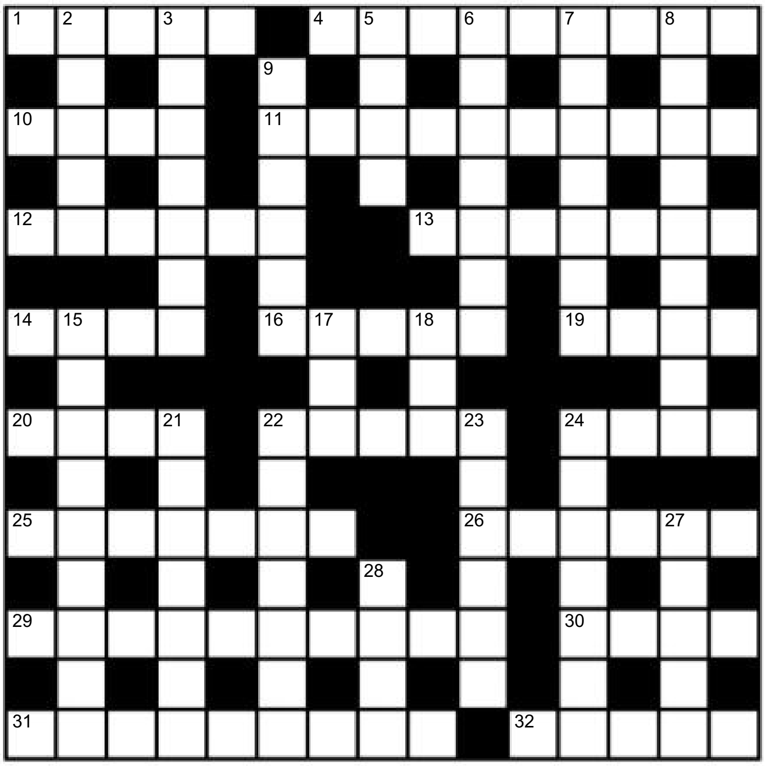
PUZZLES

Challenge yourself by solving these puzzles and mind stretchers, then check your answers on page 142.



Crossword

Test your general knowledge.

ACROSS

1 Farm honkers (5)

4 Declares formally (9)

10 High-pitched flute (4)

11 Happening together (10)

12 Safe stores (6)

13 Casual tops (1-6)

14 WWII turning point (1-3)

16 Lowest-value chessmen (5)

19 Deciduous timber trees (4)

20 Cloth colourist (4)

22 Portable music players (5)

24 Deep voice (4)

25 May contain peas or beans, for example (4,3)

26 Shows broadcasts again (6)

29 Mental analysis (10)

30 Woodwind instrument (4)

31 Graceless (9)

32 Up and out of bed (5)

DOWN

2 *My Fair Lady's* _____ Doolittle (5)

3 Author of 'Ozymandias' (7)

5 Made phone call (4)

6 Consecutive parts of a meal (7)

7 International carrier (7)

8 Frequently (4,5)

9 Misbehaves (4,2)

15 Rainless months (3,6)

17 Egyptian cobra (3)

18 Indicate agreement (3)

21 Profoundly different (7)

22 Household chore (7)

23 Wanders away (6)

24 Obtains temporarily (7)

27 Model _____ Campbell (5)

28 Stupefy (4)

CROSSWORD: CROSSWORDSITE.COM; SUDOKU: SUDOKUPUZZLER.COM

Puzzle Answers
PAGES 142

		8		3		4		
3								5
4	9						6	3
			8	1	9			
8		3		7		9		6
			3	2	6			
5	3						9	1
1								4
		2		6		5		

Sudoku

HOW TO PLAY: To win, you have to put a number from 1 to 9 in each outlined section so that:

- Every horizontal row and vertical column contains all nine numerals (1-9) without repeating any of them;
- Each of the outlined sections has all nine numerals, none repeated.

IF YOU SOLVE IT WITHIN:

15 minutes, you're a true expert
30 minutes, you're no slouch
60 minutes or more, maybe numbers aren't your thing

BRAIN POWER
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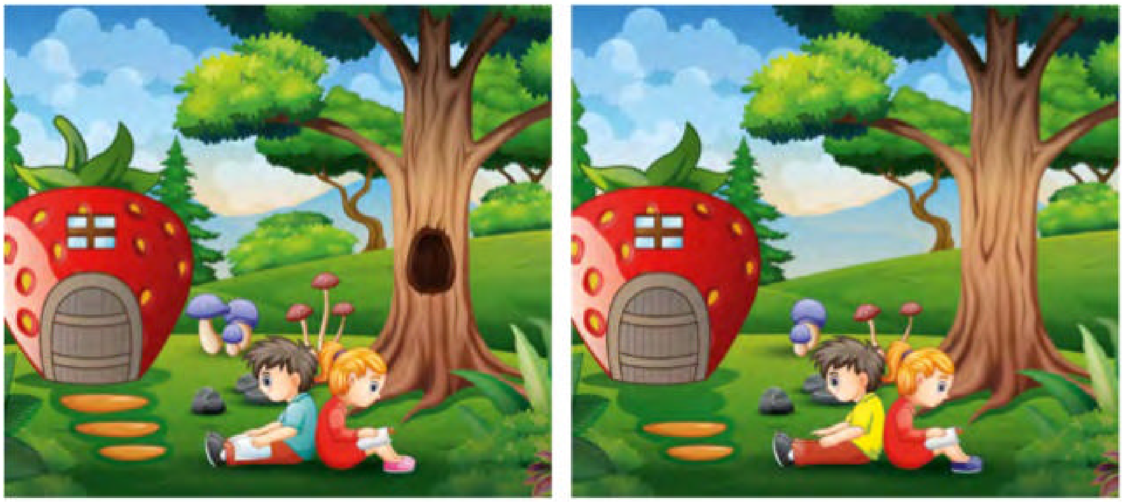
"Write, Erase, Rewrite"

FAMILY FUN

Puzzle Answers
PAGE 142

Spot The Difference

There are ten differences. Can you find them?



* * *

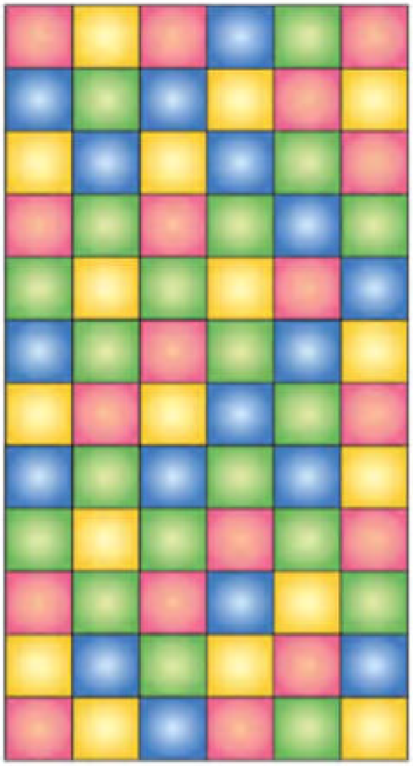
Kaleidomaze

Cross the bridge from bottom to top.

You do not have to start at a pink square but you must follow the correct colour sequence.

You may only travel from a pink square to a yellow one, from a yellow square to a blue one, from a blue square to a green one, and from a green square to a pink one.

Diagonal moves are not allowed.



🟥	🟨	🟥	🟦	🟩	🟥
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🟨	🟦	🟨	🟦	🟩	🟥
🟥	🟩	🟥	🟩	🟦	🟩
🟩	🟨	🟩	🟨	🟥	🟦
🟦	🟩	🟥	🟩	🟦	🟨
🟨	🟥	🟨	🟦	🟩	🟥
🟦	🟩	🟦	🟩	🟦	🟨
🟩	🟨	🟩	🟥	🟩	🟥
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🟨	🟦	🟩	🟨	🟥	🟦
🟥	🟨	🟦	🟥	🟩	🟨

ILLUSTRATION: VECTEEZY.COM

WHAT'S NEW IN
RD
TALKS

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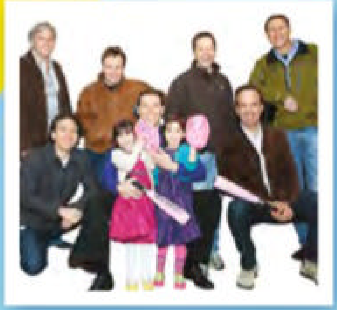
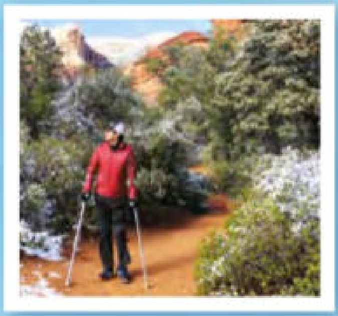
READ BY *Zoë Meunier*



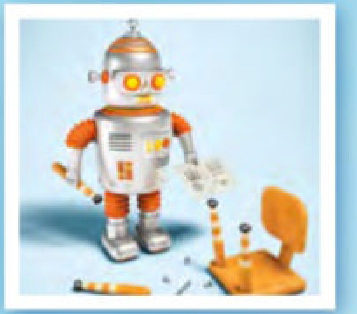
THE COUNCIL OF DADS

After receiving some devastating news, a father puts together a selfless plan.



LET'S GO FOR A WALK

An accident leads a man to a newfound appreciation for the benefits of walking.



ROBOTS GONE WILD!

What happens when you build a machine to do a job just like a human?

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BACKGROUND IMAGE: GETTY IMAGES

TRIVIA

Test Your General Knowledge

1. What condiment was in short supply last year across France, despite being named for a French city? *1 point*

2. The UK's Norland College is known for training elite providers of what service? *2 points*

3. How many cells do bacteria have? *1 point*

4. Volunteers receive anaesthesia when they donate which of the following: blood, bone marrow or plasma? *2 points*

5. Who recently became the third person to earn a billion dollars by making movies? *2 points*

6. Players in what professional sport perform signature celebratory moves as 'Ice in My Veins', 'Night Night' and 'The Silencer'? *1 point*

7. Which cetaceans recently began attacking small boats, sometimes sinking them? *2 points*

8. Roughly 255 million years ago, India, Africa and Australia were all touching which continent? *1 point*

9. What Canadian actor said, "Bullying puts you in a place where, later, you have so much unlearning to do"? *2 points*

10. What city suffered a devastating earthquake in 1755? *1 point*

11. What was the ninth-century Japanese Emperor Uda describing when he wrote, "When it lies down, it curls in a circle like a coin"? *1 point*

12. What is the world's best-selling studio album by a female musician? *1 point*

13. Zara Rutherford and her brother Mack recently became the youngest woman and the youngest person, respectively, to do what? *1 point*

14. What tabletop-game franchise of *Stranger Things* fame will get a new film this year? *1 point*

15. Billions of the people alive today wouldn't have food to eat if it weren't for ammonia, a fertiliser compound made by extracting which element from the air? *1 point*

16-20 **Gold medal** **11-15** **Silver medal** **6-10** **Bronze medal** **0-5** **Wooden spoon**

Answers: 1. Dijon mustard. **2.** Nannying. **3.** One cell each. **4.** Bone marrow. **5.** Peter Jackson. **6.** The NBA. **7.** Orcas. Scientists don't fully understand this behaviour, but it may be a playful 'fad'. **8.** Antarctica. **9.** Elliot Page. **10.** Lisbon. **11.** A cat. **12.** Shania Twain's *Come on Over*. **13.** Fly solo around the world. **14.** Dungeons & Dragons. **15.** Nitrogen.

PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES

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PUZZLE ANSWERS

From Page 136

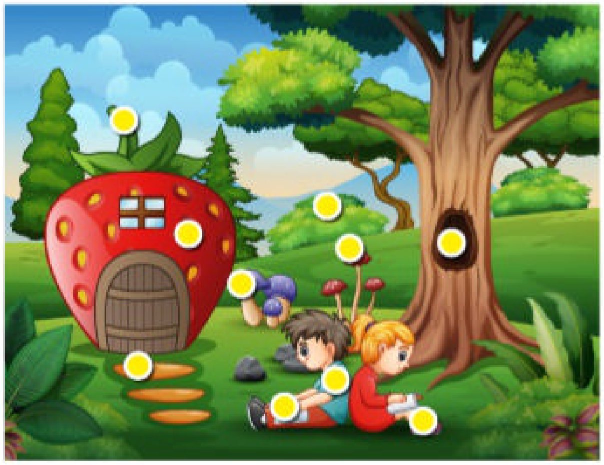
Crossword

1 G	2 E	E	3 S	E	■	4 P	5 R	O	6 C	L	7 A	I	8 M	S
■	L	■	H	■	9 A	■	A	■	O	■	I	■	A	■
10 F	I	F	E	■	11 C	O	N	C	U	R	R	E	N	T
■	Z	■	L	■	T	■	G	■	R	■	L	■	Y	■
12 V	A	U	L	T	S	■	■	13 T	S	H	I	R	T	S
■	■	■	E	■	U	■	■	■	E	■	N	■	I	■
14 D	15 D	A	Y	■	16 P	17 A	W	18 N	S	■	19 E	L	M	S
■	R	■	■	■	■	S	■	O	■	■	■	■	E	■
20 D	Y	E	21 R	■	22 I	P	O	D	23 S	■	24 B	A	S	S
■	S	■	A	■	R	■	■	■	T	■	O	■	■	■
25 S	E	E	D	P	O	D	■	■	26 R	E	R	U	27 N	S
■	A	■	I	■	N	■	28 S	■	A	■	R	■	A	■
29 P	S	Y	C	H	I	A	T	R	Y	■	30 O	B	O	E
■	O	■	A	■	N	■	U	■	S	■	W	■	M	■
31 I	N	E	L	E	G	A	N	T	■	32 A	S	T	I	R

Sudoku

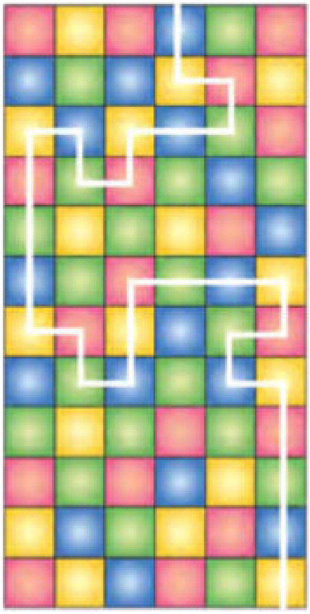
2	1	8	6	3	5	4	7	9
3	6	7	4	9	2	1	8	5
4	9	5	1	8	7	2	6	3
6	7	4	8	1	9	3	5	2
8	2	3	5	7	4	9	1	6
9	5	1	3	2	6	8	4	7
5	3	6	2	4	8	7	9	1
1	8	9	7	5	3	6	2	4
7	4	2	9	6	1	5	3	8

Spot The Difference



Kaleidomaze

Cross the bridge from bottom to top.
Following the colour sequence.



CROSSWORD: CROSSWORDSITE.COM; SUDOKU: SUDOKUPUZZLER.COM; ILLUSTRATION: VECTEEZY.COM

WORD POWER

And They All Lived Happily Ever After

This month's quiz will whisk you off to a kingdom far, far away, full of fair maidens, dashing princes and mythical monsters. Your quest: choose the correct definitions for these words, all inspired by fairy tales and fables. Once you slay that dragon, turn to the next page for your happily ever after.

BY *Sarah Chassé*

1. valiant – A: royal.
B: courageous. C: gentle.

2. crone – A: cruel old woman.
B: enchanted frog. C: long-lost twin.

3. motif – A: series of riddles.
B: hooded cloak. C: recurring theme.

4. talisman – A: suit of armour.
B: lucky object. C: bad omen.

5. chalice – A: drinking vessel.
B: lost child found in forests.
C: troll's weapon.

6. damsel – A: young woman.
B: magic bean. C: golden goose.

7. betrothed – A: wealthy.
B: covered in jewels. C: engaged.

8. kelpie – A: witch. B: water spirit.
C: stepsister.

9. pastoral – A: rural.
B: ancient. C: passed down.

10. knave – A: deceitful man.
B: travelling musician.
C: eldest son.

11. parable – A: tall tower.
B: shepherd's staff.
C: story with a moral.

12. soothsayer – A: matchmaker.
B: singer of ballads. C: psychic.

13. coronate – A: banish.
B: crown. C: wake with a kiss.

14. ogre – A: impossible task.
B: drawbridge. C: man-eating giant.

15. joust – A: overthrow a king.
B: curse for 100 years.
C: battle on horseback.

Answers

1. valiant – (B) courageous.
Thanks to the valiant efforts of firefighters, no one was injured in the blaze.

2. crone – (A) cruel old woman.
Mrs Claxton is known as the neighbourhood crone, but she's always been kind to me.

3. motif – (C) recurring theme.
The battle between good and evil is a common motif in literature from many cultures.

4. talisman – (B) lucky object.
Giuseppe carries a rabbit's foot as a talisman when he visits the casino.

5. chalice – (A) drinking vessel.
The wicked queen offered her enemy a chalice full of poison.

6. damsel – (A) young woman.
I'm no damsel in distress, I have a black belt in karate!

7. betrothed – (C) engaged.
The princess is betrothed to a handsome duke and will be a blushing bride.

8. kelpie – (B) water spirit.
According to Scottish legend, kelpies lure unsuspecting travellers to drown in lakes and rivers.

9. pastoral – (A) rural.
Hans prefers his quiet, pastoral life over the hustle and bustle of cities.

10. knave – (A) deceitful man.
"That knave Donald has betrayed me!" Jack cried.

11. parable – (C) story with a moral.
The parable of King Midas reminds us to be careful what we wish for.

12. soothsayer – (C) psychic.
After examining the tea leaves, the soothsayer predicted a rich harvest.

13. coronate – (B) crown.
Leonora was coronated as queen immediately after her wicked uncle died.

14. ogre – (C) man-eating giant.
Perhaps the most famous ogre, Shrek, is more friendly than fearsome.

15. joust – (C) battle on horseback.
Sir Percival and his rival, Sir William, will joust tomorrow at noon to settle their differences.

VOCABULARY RATINGS

5–9: Fair
10–12: Good
13–15: Word Power Wizard

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NEW ZEALAND
VILLA MARIA
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